

SERMONS

ON THE

Following Subjects,

VIZ.

- | | |
|---|---|
| I. The Advantage of the LIVING above the DEAD. | IX. The Repentance of a CHURCH, its best and only Security. |
| II. The COMFORT and HAPPINESS of true Believers. | X. The Removal of the RIGHTEOUS, or decaying PIETY, a Call for PRAYER. |
| III. The ART of numbering our DAYS. | XI. The deplorable State of a PEOPLE, or NATION, where Iniquity abounds. |
| IV. The Extremity of his People, GOD's Opportunity. | XII. Visible JUDGMENTS on some, a loud Call upon others, to close and serious Reflection. |
| V. ELIHU's Advice under Affliction. | XIII. CHRIST the SUN of RIGHTEOUSNESS, &c. |
| VI. The Manner and Advantage of setting GOD always before us. | XIV. ELISHA's Cry after ELIJAH's GOD, &c. |
| VII. JESUS CHRIST the FATHER's Servant. | |
| VIII. GOD the Shepherd, or Restorer of his People. | |

By the Late REVEREND and Learned,
Mr. EDWARD BRODHURST.

LONDON:

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and RICHARD HETT, at the *Bible and Crown*: Both in the *Poultry*; and THOMAS WARREN, in *Birmingham*. M.DCCXXXIII.



T H E
P R E F A C E.

WHEN it pleases the *All-wise GOD*, in the Course of his Providence, to remove such Persons as are eminently pious and useful; every considering Mind will be sensibly grieved, and lament the Loss of so much Religion and Virtue from our World: But when such Ministers are cut off, in the Midst of their Days and in the Height of their Usefulness, richly furnished and ripe for Service, the Loss is peculiarly sorrowful and grievous.

THE Reverend Mr. Edward Brodhurst, whose Death is justly lamented by all that knew him, at least by all that knew his real Worth, was One of this Character: His Praise is in the Gospel throughout all the neighbouring Churches; and, (if the Testimony of those who knew him most intimately may be regarded,) there were few that excelled him either in his Christian or Ministerial Character. His Devotion and Charity did

very well deserve Imitation: *As to the former, it may be remarked, that not only his Diary is a present Witness of his frequent Converses with GOD and his own Soul; but, besides the more usual Seasons of Retirement, He was also wont, (as He once told and advised a particular Friend, recommending the Practice from his own Experience,) to set apart a determinate Portion of Time once every Week for more protracted and solemn Devotion, with a particular View to his Character and Circumstances as a Minister: It may also be observed, with Regard to the latter, that according to his Ability and Opportunity He was rich in good Works, ready to distribute, and willing to communicate: No inconsiderable Part of his yearly Income was always devoted to some charitable Purposes, and looked upon as sacred and unalienable: And, as He excelled in Acts of Charity and Beneficence, so He was remarkably free from all Affectation of Vain-glory, and did truly follow the Caution of our Blessed Lord in this very Case, Let not thy left Hand know what thy right Hand doth. His Ministerial Endowments were no less great and deserving: He was an experimental, an evangelical, a judicious, and an affectionate Preacher: As He greatly lamented the visible Decays of practical Religion amongst Christians of all sorts, so He was no less Studious to revive and promote it both by his publick and private Endeavours: He was One that took Heed to himself and to his Doctrine, and was an Example of the Believers in Word and*
 Con-

P R E F A C E.

*Conversation: He used indefatigable Pains in his publick Work, and was remarkably prudent in his whole Behaviour: He watched for the Souls of Others as One that must give an Account, and endeavoured by faithful Instruction and Warning to stand clear of the Blood of all Men: In one Word, He was a great Ornament and Support to Religion both as a Christian and as a Minister: And it ought not to be overlooked, that as a Tutor likewise, his principal Concern was to instill the great Principles of Religion and Virtue into the Youth under his Care, being very sensible that all our Hopes and Prospects with regard to Religion must very much depend upon the Formation and Turn of younger Minds. But his Character need not be any farther enlarged upon in this Place; a very just and amiable Representation may be seen of it in his Epitaph, at the Close of the Contents, drawn up by an ingenious and celebrated Writer *.*

THE World, it must be owned, is richly furnished with many excellent and useful Sermons already; and perhaps, the more difficult Points of Theology were never examined with more Accuracy, and the sacred Oratory of the Pulpit (in many Respects) brought to a higher Pitch of Perfection than in the present Age: But, after all, whether that holy Zeal and Fervency, that tender and com-

* Dr. WATTS.

A 3

passionate

passionate Regard to the Souls of Men, that savoury experimental strain of Preaching and Writing, for which our Fore-Fathers were so justly renowned, is not very much lost from amongst us; and, whether the Want of this is not a greater Blemish and Defect, than a little more Accuracy or Politeness can be (esteemed) an Excellence or Ornament, is left to the Judgment of every thinking and serious Person: "If the Ministers of this Age have gained much one Way, it is greatly to be lamented that they have lost much more another:" This was the Sense, and these the Words of the Rev. Author, who had always the Interest of Christianity, and of vital Religion as near at Heart as most Men: The Reader therefore is not to expect that the following Discourses, (which are only a Specimen of his more ordinary and approved Manner of preaching,) should be filled with Criticism or Speculation, with polite Sentiments or new Discoveries, &c. His principal Aim and Business was to explain and inculcate the more common and important Things of Religion, and to treat of these in the most plain and powerful Manner, so as might be most for general Edification. Though He always shew'd his critical Skill and Learning so far as was necessary, yet He never made it a Matter of Ostentation: His great Knowledge and ministerial Abilities were truly sanctified, and made to subserve the Noblest Purposes in the best Manner: And with what sacred Skill, Liveliness, and Warmth He was wont to preach upon almost every Subject,

many

many that knew him, and have received great Advantage from his Ministry, are able to testify. His Judgment and Spirit are both seen in the following Sermons, the former in explaining and dividing the Word of Truth, and the latter in applying it to the Heart and Conscience in the most plain, condescending, and fervent Manner: So that, if these Discourses will not gratify a vain and curious Mind, as is not expected; it is yet hoped they will please and improve the serious Christian, and at the same Time give no Offence to the Scholar or the Critick.

IF it be said, that they are posthumous, and what the Author himself did not polish and prepare for such a publick View; it may be sufficient to observe, that they are nevertheless genuine; and though some of them may want the distinct finishing of his own masterly Hand, yet there is Reason to hope that, as they gave great Pleasure and Satisfaction from the Pulpit, they will be no less acceptable to all impartial Persons from the Press; especially if it be consider'd, that not only the same Spirit and Piety, the same Sense and Matter is here seen, but that the same Language is also preserved as near as possible. They were several of them transcribed from those of his Papers that were legibly wrote in long Hand; and Others, with a particular Care and Diligence, from what was wrote in a more compendious Manner. Upon the whole, they come out with as much Advantage, (all things considered,) as

any Work of this Nature can be supposed to do; though after all, they must claim, (as is usual and reasonable in such Cases,) a more candid and favourable Acceptance upon the Account of their being posthumous.

AS to the Subjects here handled; they are All of them very weighty and serious, and Many of 'em were consider'd upon publick Occasions: An unaffected strain of Piety runs through the whole, and plainly discovers the Spirit of the Writer*: It is not necessary to give the Reader a distinct Account of every Sermon: He will easily perceive with what View they were most of them calculated; namely, to improve some particular Providences, either regarding Persons singly †, or respecting the State of Religion and Affairs in general ||: They were some of them preached at neighbouring Congregations §; and, at the Request of many who heard them, are now made publick: The last was delivered lately at an Annual Meeting of Ministers*; and as it gave great

* Note, If they are not every one of them placed in an Order so very exact as they might be, (which is not a Matter of very great Importance,) the Reader is desired to excuse it for Reasons not needful here to be mentioned: If the Thirteenth followed the Seventh, or the Fourth was put after the Eighth the Order might be something better. † As the First, Third, and Fifth. || The Fourth, Ninth, Tenth, Eleventh, Twelfth and Fourteenth. § The Sixth, Tenth, Eleventh—

* At Dudley in Worcestershire,

and

and general Satisfaction, there is Reason to hope that the Publication of it with the rest will not be unacceptable, especially to those, (Ministers as well as Others,) who have desired it, and then judged it very seasonable. It appears almost in every Discourse, (but more especially in some,) how deeply affected the Author was with the languishing State of Religion; and how greatly concerned for the Recovery of it in this Age of prevailing Coldness and Indifference: It is here seen that He knew how to speak a Word in Season, and with a sacred Energy; as One that had indeed a divine Unction, and came to his Hearers with full Authority in the Name of the LORD: May the great God set 'em Home upon every Heart and Conscience, with some answerable Power and Influence, that they may not only be written on this Paper with Ink, but on the Hearts of Men by the Spirit of the living GOD.

IT is greatly hoped, they will meet with some Entertainment, and be of some Service, wheresoever they are spread; but more especially, amongst those who knew the Author, or heard the Sermons: However, they are now recommended to the World under the Conduct and Blessing of Heaven, and followed with earnest Prayer to that of God who can only give the Increase. If they may prove of any great or extensive Use to the Souls of Men, the Glory that will by this Means redound to the Blessed God, will abundantly compensate all the Care and Pains that have been taken in
pub.

P R E F A C E.

publishing of them; Or, if those only who received any Impressions from the Hearing of them, shall find that these are revived, strengthened, and improved to any saving Purpose by the Reading of 'em, the End of their Publication will be richly answered. Those who have reaped little or no Advantage under the Author's Ministry whilst living, wou'd do well to consider that He being dead yet speaketh; and as they will now have had the Opportunity of a double Advantage both from the Pulpit and the Press, it greatly concerns them to improve the latter, if they wou'd not have the former rise up in Judgment against them, or a Minister of the Gospel appear to their Condemnation in the Day of the LORD JESUS: But, if the Labours of Ministers, both living and Dead, are all neglected and lost upon 'em, they may tremble to think of that flaming Account and complicated Misery, which will be the dreadful Consequence of their aggravated Guilt, and abused Mercies.

To conclude, it is not much doubted but every serious intelligent Person will think, upon his perusing such Discourses as these, that whensoever publish'd, they can never be out of Season; and that they may prove both seasonable and effectual to some good Purpose or other, is the united and fervent Request of all those that are any ways concerned in the Publication of them.

CON-



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M. S.

M. S.

Hoc Marmore Commemoratur
Vir, in sacris supra Socios peritus,
Nec in Literis humanis minus Sciens:
Rebus divinis a primâ ætate deditus,
Veritatis libere studiosus,
Fidei Christianæ strenuus Assertor
Et Pietate nulli Secundus:
Concionator eximius,
Ratione, Suadelâ, Eloquio potens:
Pastor pro Grege sibi commisso
Sollicitus & Vigil pene supra vires.
Moribus facilis, Vitâ beneficus,
Omnigenæ Charitatis Exemplar:
Mille Virtutibus instructus.
Quas sacra celavit Modestia,
Sed non usque celabuntur:
I Lector & expecta Diem
Quâ Cælo Terrisque simul innotescet
Qualis & Quantus fuit

EDWARDUS BRODHURST.

Natus est agro *Darbiensi* 1691.
Birminghamiæ defunctus *Julii* 21. 1730.
Animam ad superos avolantem
Ecclesia Militans luget,
Triumphans gratulatur,
Suscipit CHRISTUS, agnoscit DEUS,
Euge fidelis Serve!

E P I T A P H.

This calls to our Remembrance
A Person of superior skill in Divinity,
Nor less acquainted with Humane Literature:
Inclin'd from his Infancy to Things Sacred.
An impartial enquirer after Truth,
An able Defender of the Christian Faith;
A truly Pious and Devout Man;
A Preacher that Excelled
In force of Reason and art of Perswasion:
A Pastor Vigilant beyond his Strength,
Over the Flock committed to his Charge:
Of Courteous Behaviour and Beneficent Life:
A Pattern of Charity in all its Branches.
A Man adorn'd with many Virtues,
Conceal'd under a Veil of Modesty;
But shall not for ever be conceal'd:
Go Reader expect the Day,
When Heaven and Earth at once shall know
How deserving a Person

Mr. *EDWARD BRODHURST* was.

He was Born in *Darbyshire*, 1691.
Dy'd at *Birmingham* July 21. 1730:
His Soul ascending to the blest above,
The Church on Earth bemoans
The Church Triumphant Congratulates,
Is receiv'd by CHRIST approv'd of GOD,
Well done Good and Faithful Servant.

B O O K S Printed for, and Sold by Thomas Warren at the Printing-Office against the Swan Tavern in Birmingham.

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S E R M O N I.

The Advantage of the L I V I N G above
the D E A D.

ECCLES. IX. 5.

For the Living know that they shall die : —

AND do they know it? Who would ^{SERM. I.} think it that considers how they Live? — *Op 3*
Do *they* know that they shall die who never consider it, and make no Provision for it? Who live as if there was no such Thing as Dying, or as if Dying could in no case be a Disadvantage to them? Nevertheless it is True, as the Wise-Man says, *The Living know that they shall die*: That we may rightly conceive of his meaning it should be observed, that in the preceding Verse, He gives Life the Preference to a State of Death: *A living Dog, says he, is better than a dead Lion*; the meanest Person in Life is Superior to, and more Excellent than the greatest in Death; howsoever vain and transitory that busy and sprightly
B Thing

SERM I. Thing we call Life be; its yet Noble and Excellent in it self, and has a nearer Resemblance of the Creator than all the Glories of the inanimate World: And this, says *Solomon*, is one of the Excellencies of it, namely, that those who Enjoy it, or the Living, know that They shall Die; for if we observe the Connection of these Words We shall find They come in as a Reason of what went before: For the Living know, &c. Clearly implying, that upon this Account Life is so Excellent: It may appear somewhat strange indeed, that the Holy Ghost should use so many Words to prove, that Life is better than Death; and yet the Method of Confirming and Proving this is more surprising; for a plain Truth here seems to be proved by a more difficult Reason: It is plain that Life is better than Death; but the Reason that is assign'd for it seems to be difficult. The Living know, &c. as if He had said the same Thing in *another* Form, thus, because the Living know that They shall Die, therefore Living is better than Dying; But the Argument the Preacher here makes use of, will appear intelligible enough, if we consider that Death fixes the Soul unalterably in Happiness or Misery: When this is once over there is nothing more to be done in the Service of God, or for the Advancement of his Honour; nor is there any correcting what is amiss; there is no Mercy to be obtained, or Pardon procured by the Dead; but this the Living have an Opportunity of; and because They know themselves

themselves under the Sentence of Death, it is SERM. 12
 a powerful Incentive to seek it; the Dead can ———
do no more, and They can *die* no more, and if
 They have not died well They are lost for
 ever; but this the Living may do; They know
 that the Conclusion of Life, which is frail,
 and uncertain at best, is hastening on apace,
 and therefore are in a Capacity at least of get-
 ting into a Readiness for eternal Life and
 Blessedness.

IN speaking to these Words I shall consider.

I. How the Living know that They shall Die.

II. WHEREIN They have, *in this Respect* the Advantage of the Dead.

I. LET me inquire how the Living know that They shall Die? To which I answer in the following Particulars:

(I.) THEY know it is the Appointment of the great God. He has fixed and determined the Matter by an unalterable Decree; and He has a Right to do so: He who made Man what He is, has an Absolute Right to his Creatures Service; and if this Creature does not, or will not answer the End for which He was made, He may justly dissolve, yea annihilate Him, if He pleases; or He may afflict Him in what manner He sees fit, and yet continue his Being: When He made Man He laid before Him a

SERM. I. Rule of Life, and let Him know that this was — the way to Blessedness, and that to Neglect this would be very Dangerous, nay Ruinous: He expressly threatened Him in Case of Contempt of his Law; and no sooner was Man fallen but that Sentence was bound upon the Sinner by a solemn Denunciation from Heaven, and all his Descendants were to feel the Effects of it: *Dust Thou art, and unto Dust Thou shalt return: Gen. iii. 19.* Where it may be observ'd by the Way, that They talk more like *Heathens* than *Christians* who call Death, a *Debt due to Nature*; which is a very improper and unwary though common saying: Nature in its first Estate was *Immortal* by the Divine Appointment, and *Mortality* is the Effect of the Curse; it is not natural, but penal, as it is the Offspring of Sin: it was because of Transgression that *God appointed unto all Men once to die: Heb. ix. 27.* So we are told, *Rom. xii. Death passed upon all Men, for that all have sinned;* and in *Chap. vi. 23.* 'tis expressly said, that *the Wages of Sin is Death:* Now since God has determined this Matter, and asserted it to us so clearly, we may know that the Thing will be; for *his Counsel shall stand, and He will accomplish all his Pleasure. Isa. xlv. 10.*

BESIDES He has holy, and wise Ends to serve hereby: We may easily see that the certain Prospect of Death before Us is an excellent Means of keeping the World in Awe: There is nothing lays so powerful a Restraint upon the Wickedness of Men; nothing so much

Awes

Awes, and fortifies good Men against Temptations; and nothing tends so much to loosen them from this World, or work them up into a Meetness for a better Life. ———

Since this Matter then is established by the Decree of God, who has a Right to do it, and wise Ends to serve by it; all the Living may be very well assured that They *shall* die. But again,

(2.) They know it also from the general and frequent Execution of this Decree in the World: Hereupon *Joshua* calls it *the Way of all the Earth*: Chap. xxii. 14. Our Friends and Acquaintance are daily dropping on the right Hand, and on the Left: We have seldom seen such frequent and awful Instances of the Curses taking Place as we have seen within these few Months *: nor is there any Person so vain to hope for an Exemption in this Case, because all the Deaths He sees around Him are so many effectual Operations of the first Sentence: They are a strong and solemn Assurance to us that Gods purpose is not changed, and that the Curse has all the Energy now that it ever had: Every Hour wears away a Part of our Lives, and brings One or Another to his *last* Moments: No Strength or Vigour of Constitution can withstand the stroke of Death: the

* This refers to a particular Season, when a threatening and uncommon Sicknes did very much prevail, and upon the Occasion of which this Sermon was preached.

SERM. I. most healthful become Ghastly, Breathless, and
 ———— unmov'ing Carcasses as soon as ever it receives
 a Commission to seize them: who or whatever
 we are, Rich or Poor; Learned or Ignorant;
 Good or Bad; we must fall as others have done
 before us: *There is no Discharge in that War:*
Eccles. viii. 8. look down into the Dust of the
 Grave, and there View Thousands heaped One
 upon Another: this has been the Case through
 all the Generations of the World: and what
 is it Thou mayst read engraven upon such a
 Sight, but this? *All must Die.* Are not *we* of
 the same Earth with the Generations past,
 and under the same Curse? Have we more
 Force to protect ourselves? Is God less true
 to his Word? Or less just to cut the Sinner off?
 Certainly our *earthly Houses must be dissolved:*
2 Cor. v. 1. May we not look round us, and
 see the Men that were Hail and Vigorous a
 few Days ago languishing, groaning, pining a-
 way and dying; and others seized and gone at
 once almost before They perceive themselves
 amiss. Again

(3.) THEY know it from the Symptoms of
 Death which they feel in themselves: Are not
 the Decays of Nature, the Uneasinesses we
 feel, and the many Distempers we are liable
 to, the Harbingers and Forerunners of Death?
 Are not all these the Monitors of what we are
 to expect? And, if we listen attentively to
 them, may we not hear the sound of their Mas-
 ter's Feet behind them? The Fluids and Solids
 of which these Bodies are composed are in
 daily

daily Conflict: It is the Hand of God which SERM. I. keeps the Ballance between them: While they — are heated or cooled there are a thousand Ministers of Death stand around, and they are ready Instruments of Providence to fall upon us, and reduce us to our native Dust whenever God issues out his Order: There are very few of us that pass many Days without some or other sensible Disorder, (which is a shake given to this mortal Frame by which it is less able to bear what comes next) whether it be a sick Stomach, an aking Head, pained Bowels, difficult Breathing, or a burning Fever: by these Death is making its Approach, and undermining these Tabernacles in which we dwell: They are so many advanced Steps towards striking us to the very Heart, and bringing our Lives to a full End: They tell us the dreadful Onset will soon be made, from which there is no Escape, and against which there is no Defence.

T H E R E are others who more visibly begin to Die even whilst they Live: Their dim Eyes and deaf Ears, their weak and trembling Limbs, their chill Blood, loss of Appetite, and a load of Infirmities under which they bow down towards the Earth, plainly tell them whither they are going, and where they must be shortly laid; even in the silent *Graves* which are *ready for* them.

II. I come to shew in the next Place wherein the Living have the Advantage of the Dead: The Living know that they shall die.

SERM. I. (1.) THEIR State and Case may be altered
 ——— for the better: You who stand in no other Relation to the blessed God than that of Rebel-Creatures who have abused and dishonoured your Lord and Owner may yet be made Humble, Obedient and Holy: You may be pardoned, and justified, and have your Souls delivered from the reigning Power and Dominion of Sin: at present you are in an Unholy State and utterly incapable of the heavenly Blessedness; but you may be made the Children of God and Heirs of eternal Life: you now stand exposed to all the threatnings of a broken Law; but these you *may* have cancelled, and be interested in the glorious Promises of the Gospel: You are now Slaves to Satan; but you *may* be made Members of the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, and derive purifying, quickening, strengthening, and comforting Influences from him your glorious Head: You are now Objects of the Divine Displeasure and Abhorrence; but you *may* have an Interest in his special Love, Favour, and Care: You *may* be put into the Covenant of Grace, wherein you shall be secured of every good Thing for Time and Eternity, wherein God and Christ, Heaven and Earth, Life and Death shall *all* be made Yours: And is not this a glorious Privilege? From *this* the Dead that dyed in Sin are for ever shut out: Nothing of all this can be done for *them*: *Their* State is not to be altered: there are *no* Acts of Grace past beyond the Grave; *no* Reconciliation of Souls to

to God, nor of God to them: *He that is filthy* SERM. I.
let Him be filthy still; He that is unjust, let him —
be unjust still, is the Language of the World
 and State to come: Oh, at what rate would
 departed Sinners purchase a possibility of Help:
 but in Vain do they wish and cry for it, now
 the irrevocable Sentence is past upon them:
O that you were Wise, that you understood this,
that you wou'd Consider your latter End! Deut.
xxxii. 29.

(2.) They have room to correct the Mistakes they have made. Which of us have not made very great Ones that we would now wish to have corrected e'er we go hence? We know that Life is the only Opportunity for this: They who are *free among the Dead* are rendered for ever incapable of doing it: It is on *Earth* we have such Calls as these, *Repent and be converted, that your Sins may be blotted out: Now is the accepted Time: Now is the Day of Salvation.* This is the Work not only of those that begin to be Serious; but even of those that have long been engaged in a Course of real Religion: Its what must run through all *their* Lives; for even the best are making Mistakes: and it is their Advantage whilst they live that They have Opportunities of correcting them: How little soever this great Privilege is valued, and though it be neglected now; yet it is wished for in vain by despairing Souls who have shot the Gulf, and are fixed in eternal Misery: but we have the Calls of Repentance founding in our Ears: the neglected

SERM. I. ted Saviour is yet offered, and slighted Mercy
 — may yet be had: Our guilty Souls may yet
 be delivered, and our Lusts be mortified
 and overcome: Ignorance, Pride, and Enmi-
 ty to God and Goodness may yet be slain: Sen-
 suality, Worldliness, Sloth, Luke-warmness,
 want of Love to the Word of God, and the I-
 mage and People of God may yet be cured: the
 neglected Closet may be frequented, and God's
 House better attended: Our Hearts, our Words,
 and our Ways may be more carefully watched:
 Our Dealings rendered more Just and Honest,
 our Speech more True and Charitable, our Be-
 haviour more Peaceable and Exemplary, and our
 whole Conversation more *becoming the Gospel*.

(3.) THEY have Opportunities of doing a great
 deal of service yet for God: They may add
 much to the stock of Grace they have already
 got; may abide steady in his Worship, in all the
 Parts of it, and do more yet to improve their
 Communion with Heaven: They may yet Ho-
 nour God by the Resistance of Temptations,
 and Victory over them; by patient bearing of
 Affliction, and giving the World an Example
 of Submission to the Divine Will: They may
 make the Grace of God shine illustriously bright
 in the Eyes of Men, and recommend Religion
 to their Esteem by a suitable Christian Carriage
 and Behaviour under the severest Trials: They
 may endear Religion to others by shewing that
 it gives the *best* Comforts in the *worst* of Times:
 Their Example may be of great Service to the
 World, whilst they live in an habitual Watch-
 fulness

fulness and Readiness for Death, and their **SERM. I.**
 whole Life and Conversation is even and regular: They may by a holy Indifference to present Things, while in the Possession of them, shew to all the World that their Hearts are elsewhere, and that they do not forget God the Giver of them: Their growing Humility, Mortification, and Indifference to the good Things of this Life may shew a superiority in Heavenly - Mindedness to Worldly - Mindedness whereby God may be greatly honoured and Religion credited: They are yet Capable of instructing the Ignorant, of reproofing the Wicked, of encouraging the Weak, or Dejected, and of relieving the Poor, and thus doing a great deal of Service to their Fellow-Creatures: They are yet Capable of training up Others for the Service of God, (their Servants and Children,) and of laying a Foundation for Religion in the next Age: They may at the same Time both greatly *assist* those that are Holy, and *shame* those that are Wicked by a Chearful Obedience to the Redeemer, and letting them see that a Religious Life is the most chearful and comfortable Life.

(4.) THEY have Room to prepare to meet Death with Comfort. Dying Work is very awful and difficult Work: the Living will soon find it so, though they can now Sleep at the hearing of it: With what Force does it strike the Mind to stand with Death in View, to see and to feel its Approaches? here, says the

SERM. I. the Soul, is a strange and gloomy Scene that — that I must now enter upon, and there is no avoiding it: I am now to die, and after Death I shall not live again here: When once I have changed Worlds by putting off this mortal Flesh, the immortal Spirit goes to God that gave it, by his Sentence to be fixed for ever: And who can forbear startling and trembling at the Thoughts least all should not be right? What if it be not? I fear, says the Soul, least something or other be left *undone* that is necessary *to be done*; or least it be done *wrong* and want to be done *again*: I cannot help (when I think of this awful Scene) wishing for a little more Room to consider of the matter again, and to weigh it with that Solemnity and Deliberation the Importance of the Case requires. May I search the matter again and again, that I may be upon sure Grounds because Eternity depends upon it. I want clearer Evidences of the Truth of Grace, and fuller Assurance of my Interest in Jesus Christ: I want to see the *Spirit witnessing with my Spirit that I am a Child of God*.

BESIDES I do not know what Difficulties I am to go through in my Conflict with Death: It is a strange unknown Trial I never made before: There is something in it terrifying which Nature shrinks and shudders at the Thoughts of: A vast Gloom surrounds me, and I know not how to conceive of it: I am launching forth into a boundless Ocean and must Land I know not where: There are Terrors in Death and in the

the Consequences of it that I am not yet got **SERM. I.**
 above: I long for some comfortable Promise upon
 which I might fix my Soul as upon a sure
 Foundation; whereby I might know that God
 and Christ are Mine, and might conquer the
 Fear of Death, and glorify God in my last
 Moments.

I COME now to the Application of what
 has been said.

[1.] IF *the Living know that they shall die*
 what a grievous Infatuation is it, that this is
 no more attended to! The Living know they
must die, and yet they never think of it, have
 no Regard to it, or Concern about it: This is
 a Matter of so much Importance that I beg
 Leave to stop a little upon this Head, and con-
 sider first whence this arises and then endea-
 vour to shew the Folly of it.

(I.) WHENCE does this Arise?

(1.) FROM their too great Fondness for pre-
 sent Things. Their Heads and Hands are busy;
 and their Hearts are pleased with the Employ-
 ments of this World: They Idolize the World;
 and it possesses all their Care: They can think
 no further than they see, or hear; or if they
 look before them a few Months or Years, they
 can see nothing at a Distance but some Plea-
 sure, or Gain, they have the Prospect of: Their
 very Souls are sensualized and become so gross,
 that they make nothing of what they cannot
 see; or they reckon it as an unknown uncer-
 tain Thing which it can never be worth their
 while to mind; expressly contrary to the Tem-

per

O p. 18
 3 leaves

SERM. I. per and Frame of the Apostle and his Fellows ;

~~—~~ *We look not at the Things which are seen which are temporal; but at the Things which are not seen which are eternal, 2 Cor. iv. 18.* One Day and Month and Year after another they are wholly engrossed and swallowed up in these Cares and Enjoyments; and so far from being satisfied, or cloyed with what they have, that one Thing prepares and whets them for another; their Minds are in a continual Hurry; they are still in Views of new Pleasure, or new Business, and then plunge headlong into it: thus their Time and Hearts are filled; and they have no Room for further Thoughts: if the Word or Providence calls them to Attention, they cannot hear for the Buzzing that is about them; or their Thoughts are soon diverted either by the Calls of the Flesh or the World; or by the Uneasiness their own Minds feel in other Employment: thus they live as if there was no such Thing as Death and Eternity, because they never once stand to think whether there be or no.

(2.) T H E Y think of Death at a great Distance. *The Living know that they shall die*: Ay! but, say they, it will be a great while first: They look at it a great many Years off: The Young think they have a Right to do so; and Old People will not allow that their Infirmities and Decays are so great but they may live several Years longer: if yet healthful, they expect to break gradually, and so they need not

not think of dying yet: if sick they are not so **SERM. I.**
 bad but they hope it may be got over: thus —
 they Live as if they were Lords of their own
 Lives: They cannot think of dying till they
 have some plainer Tokens of it upon them:
 Could they once think of it as nearer; at their
 Houses, or Chamber-doors, or by their Bed-sides;
 it would affect them differently; but while they
 look at it at a great Distance they do not see
 its Terrors; and it appears a little Thing to
 them. O Sirs! remember how the near Ap-
 proach of it has struck many of you: What have
 you thought concerning it when you appre-
 hended its Darts to stick fast in you? What
 did you think of Religion, of Dying, of Eter-
 nity, of Life past, and of a Life to come? O!
 bring this Scene again into View: think over
 again the Impressions that were then made up-
 on your Spirits: Imagine yourselves now in
 those very Circumstances; and try if you can't
 spend fewer Hours in Chat and News, in Mirth
 and Company, and more upon your Knees and
 in your Closets, in your Bibles and with your
 own Hearts than you have heretofore done.
 This dying Scene *brought* nearer will lead you
 to see the Advantage of such a Course; and it
 may be *really* nearer, though you now vainly
 dream it is at a great Distance.

(3.) ANOTHER Reason is the great Aversion
 they have to Holiness (which alone can make
 the thoughts of Dying easy to them) and their
 Love to Sin. No wonder they are Solicitous
 to

SERM. I. to stave off all thoughts of Dying who are resolved not to part with their Lusts and yet cannot but dread the Consequence of their Living and Dying in such a Course. Sin is the sting of Death: it gives a Venom and Rancour to it that makes the wound fester even while we think of it.

(4.) BECAUSE they vainly imagine Preparation for Death is an easy Work and soon done. They are determined it shall have as little of their Time and Thoughts as may be: They dare not but think of doing something because they reckon there is no Preservation from Hell without it; but they will do as little as they dare trust to; they will have as few melancholly Thoughts as possible; and are very prone to imagine that a few Cries for Mercy on a sick Bed, and even the dregs of Life will do to offer to God; that this is a Work that *may* be done when other Things *cannot*; and hereupon they take their swing, and follow the way of their own Hearts because they think the Account will all be set straight, and the long score wiped off by a few Cries for Mercy: Alas! Man, that thou wilt run such a desperate Risk: What! was Life given thee by the great God for this, that thou shouldst live like a Brute? Does God continue Life Day after Day for this? Has he given thee a Reasonable Soul for no other Purposes than these? Has he sent his Son to die, and given his Spirit and Oracles for no other End? Are thy Soul and Heaven worth

worth no more? Or canst thou think it reason- SERM. I.
able to do no more to escape everlasting Burn-
ings? What a confounding Thing will it be
at the great Day to stand convicted before the
dreadful Tribunal, that thou hast allowed such
a foolish Thought as this and depended upon it!

(5.) BECAUSE the Thoughts of Death are very
terrible. They strike us through with Horror;
and therefore it is called by *Job* the *King of*
Terrors, that is, the most terrible of all terri-
ble Things: Death reigns over all other Ter-
rors: We are ready to tremble at the Disho-
nour and Reproach of the Grave, that Ghastliness
that must soon overspread the whole Man, that
Putrefaction that must attend us in the Prisons
of the Dead, loss of Life, converse with Friends
and the like: And when we consider it is Guilt
that thus exposeth us, and that Death is the
Serjeant of the great Judge who comes to Ar-
rest the Sinner and Summon Him to the Bar
of God; then the Ghastliness carries great Af-
frightment with it: When we consider how
roughly he will handle us, what Pain he will
give us, and what he will reduce us to; that
he is to bring us into the Presence of God, that
we are conscious of Guilt, and know his Wrath
to be terrible; what Amazement and Confusion
must this put us to!

But that which I take to be the main Rea-
son is this,

(6.) BECAUSE they have but little Hopes of
Happiness in that state they are going to. They
have a secret Consciousness that they have no-
thing

SERM. I. thing Comfortable to expect beyond Death;
 ——— and so they turn their Eyes from it as a Disagreeable Thing: It bodes no good to them, and so they cast it out of their Minds: They know that Death will put an End to all their carnal Mirth, and turn them out of all their Possessions and Enjoyments; and when their Thoughts are carried beyond Death, O! what a dismal Gloom must present it self to them? if they could force themselves to hope for Heaven, even *that* has nothing amiable in it to their Minds: They are drenched in Sense and Earth, and would not Accept of it were it offered to them, but only as a Refuge from Hell: if they could look on it with Pleasure, yet they want a Title to it: if they don't plainly see this, yet they deeply suspect it, and therefore are Averse to think of Dying.

II. WE are now come to represent the Folly of this: it is very Obvious because

Let us remember (1.) WE can die but once. If there be a fatal Error made it is never to be altered; all Cries for Mercy will avail the Creature nothing at all after Death: could he weep Tears of Blood? could he lay down Worlds of Treasure? No Arguments could persuade, no Friends be able to intercede for him. *If a Man die, shall he live again? No: He lieth down, and riseth not till the Heavens be no more, &c. Job xiv. 12, 14.* There is no such thing as being put up on a second Trial: and if thou darest to neglect the first, what would it avail thee to have
 a second

a second? Wouldst thou not grow more hardened and daring in thy Rebellion? SERM. I.

Now: can there be any thing conceived by the Mind of Man that is more contrary to all true Sense and Reason, than to neglect a Matter of the highest Importance when an Opportunity of minding it is afforded which will never be had again? Shall no Care be taken when all depends upon this one single Thread for ever? Yet so far has Sin and Satan infatuated the Souls of Men: there is but one Cast for Eternity, and that is thrown away.

(2.) Death will soon be here. The End of thy Time and Life is coming up apace: One Day dies into the Night, and one Hour dies away after another: observe the Sand passing through the Glass: feel the beating Pulse: every stroke leaves the number less, and every Breath wafts thee nearer to Eternity: And What! Man, wilt thou ~~Rear~~ and Drink and Sleep and Play till Death seize thee without having employ'd one serious Thought about it? How much nearer may it be than thou dost imagine? Nor canst thou say whether thou hast an Hour yet remaining: Little dost thou think how few are yet to come: However they are passing by as fast as ever they can; and every minute pushes forward, and crowds out that which went before: thy last minute will soon come, and thou wilt say so then; tho' all that we can say now will not persuade thee to think of it as near, or to remember and provide for it. Wilt thou not regard the

C 2

Messenger

SERM. I. Messenger of the great God who stands at the
 — Door ready to enter, and seize thee, and carry thee to his Tribunal? Surely this is a fault we want a Name for: We cannot compare it to any other instance of Folly, there being none like it in the whole Creation.

(3.) HAPPINESS or Misery everlasting immediately succeed our dying. The separated Spirit is soon ordered to the Regions it has been preparing it self for whilst here on Earth; and according to the Temper in which it left this World must it fare for ever: And is there so much depending in thy Case? Oh foolish Creature and Unwise! that dost not think this worth thy minding: What very Trifles are they which thou hast been so busy about, and so excessively fond of? What! has the word *Eternity* no weight with thee whether it be applied to Happiness or Misery? Shall it not have one serious attentive Thought? O! lay thine Ear to the Mouth of the bottomless Pit, and hear the Yellings of the wretched Prisoners there: How does this Word *Eternity* hang upon their Tongues, mingle with, and Accent all their Sighs and Groans? *that is the dreadful Word*, and it makes their *Hell*. Listen also to the Gates of the New *Jerusalem*; and hear what is the highest Note in the Songs of Angels and perfected Spirits: Is it not *Everlasting*? This Qualification at least makes their Employments and Blessedness there so Glorious and Excellent: What is it that frights the Sinner, or cheers the Saint in his dying Hour but the
 Interest

Interest that each has in that Eternity they SERM. I.
are lanching into?

(4.) PREPARATIONS to die well depend upon our serious thoughtfulness of Death. There is no such Thing as being ready to die without thinking of it: Preparation is not a matter to be perform'd by the by, or without Attention, without looking forwards and thinking what Death is, what Good, or what Harm its like to do us; what Alteration its like to make in our Case, and whither it will remove us. Preparation for Death is a Work of a great deal of Compass, and of great Difficulty; though I wou'd not be mistaken here; I mean not that we are of our selves able to make needful Preparations for it: the Spirit of God must encline the Soul to such Thoughts as are needful in this Work, assist us in it and enable us to go through with it; tho' at the same Time it is not without great Care and Pains taken on our Part.

[2.] HENCE we may infer how great an Absurdity it is to be over fond of the Things about us. *The Living know that they shall die*, and leave all that they call Dear and Good behind them: They must be taken away from present Possessions and Enjoyments, and they *know* they must: How great is their Folly and Madness then to set *their Hearts upon that which is not!* especially when they may have as much Comfort in them without that excessive Fondness for them, may part with them much more Comfortably, and be in a better Disposition for

SERM. I. **Eternal Things:** Consider this, Sinner, and be not so unequally yoked: Let not a Heaven-born Spirit be tied to a Clod of Earth: Suffer not thine immortal Soul to cleave to Things, from which thou must (and knowest thou must) very soon be separated, and which will giveth thee the more rending convulsive Twinges by how much the closer thou hast adher'd to them: Attend to the Apostle's Rule, *1 Cor. vii. 29, &c. Brethren, the Time is short, it remains that we use present Things with great indifference; for the Fashion of the World passeth away.* Look up, Christian, and be affected with the Things above according to their Excellence and real Worth: and whilst thou lookest downwards upon Things below labour to be affected towards them in some Measure according to the Appearance they will make when thou art dying from them.

[3.] How useful a Piece of Knowledge may this be to Young Persons? What a Privilege is it, to know that the Season thou now hast is soon to be over? Thou mayst yet begin, and possibly have a long Time, to bring a large Tribute of Glory to God, and obtain a bright and glorious Crown for thy own Soul: O Let all thy Powers awake to bless God: Thou art acquainted with the state of thy Case: O pray for the Direction of the Spirit to mark out thy Way, to assist, to encourage, to rouse all thy Powers, and to prevent the bewitching Charms of this World: its a great Prize put into thy Hands: consult, contrive with thy self, say,
 "What

“ What shall I now do for God? I *must* die; SERM. I.
 “ but I may possibly have a great while to ———
 “ serve God in; and how shall I best employ
 “ it? *How* shall I act most consistently with
 “ my Obligations as a reasonable Creature, and
 “ with my Profession as a Christian? I would
 “ begin now, that I may have the Comfort of
 “ it whilst I live, and when I die. ”

O LET all thy Designs center in the Honour
 of thy God and Saviour: Thou knowest thou
 shalt die: and wouldst thou die serving God,
 or serving thy Lusts? as thou livest so in Proba-
 bility thou wilt die.

[4.] H ow terrible a thought must this be
 to an old Sinner! We cannot conceive of any
 thing that carries so much dreadful Force along
 with it. Thou knowest thou shalt die, that
 Death is within a few Paces of thee; but thou
 livest without any Regard to it, a fearless,
 thoughtless, negligent, prophane Wretch; ne-
 ver concerning thy self about God, thy Soul,
 and Eternity; and now thy Time is gone, and
 Death is just at the Door: O dismal Review
 that must be made! I tremble to think this
 should be the Case of any of us, as, to look back
 upon forty or fifty Years spent, and to see no-
 thing but a dreadful Catalogue of Offences a-
 gainst God whereby dreadful Wrath has been
 treasured up against the Day of Wrath: Con-
 sider, thy Powers are now enfeebled with Age,
 and thou hast nothing but a few of the Dregs
 of Time to offer to the great God who de-
 manded it all: and canst thou think of this

SERM. I. without Horror? O dismal State! The Judge
 — is even at the Door, and just sending a Sum-
 mons to fetch thee to his awful Bar: And what
 canst thou answer him when thou appearest be-
 fore Him? What canst thou hope for at his
 Hands? Oh perplexing distressing Review!

BUT let me tell thee, that, sad as thy Case
 is, there is some glimmering of Hope; thou art
 not dead; thou art not damned: God the Fa-
 ther has yet Mercy in store for thee: There
 is Virtue in Jesus's Blood to cleanse thee from
 all Sin: There is Energy enough in the divine
 Spirit to change thy Heart, and heal thy ulcer-
 ated Soul: O delay no longer; but immediate-
 ly *fly for Refuge to the Hope that is set before*
thee.

[5.] How busy should all the Living be
 to improve the present Season? e'er a few
 Years are past, you and I must be fixed in an
 everlasting State: and so uncertain are our
 Lives that I cannot say, that I shall preach
 one more Sermon, or that you shall have one
 more call to the great Work of Life: How
 should I Preach? How should you Hear? There
 is nothing between us and the eternal World
 but this vail of Flesh; (how easily is that rent,
 and the Soul dislodged, and called to the Tri-
 bunal of the great God) and that is but a
 weak Fence against so many Diseases, and so
 many Casualties as we are continually ex-
 posed to. Our Life is compared to a Puff
 of Breath: A Vapour is all we have to
 hold it by; and on this everlasting Things
 depend.

depend. And what! Sirs, have you no Thoughts SERM. I. of making ready? Have you nothing to do this while? You that see Death is at Hand, and are just passing into Eternity, have you nothing to mind but Recreation and Gaming? Nothing to do but to Eat, and Drink, and Visit, and Chat, and Play? Let me conclude with one Word distinctly, though briefly, both to the Young and Old.

You that are Young are under the Sentence of Death, and must die as sure as you Live: O carry the thought about with you continually: Let not the precious Season of Life slide by neglected: remember you live for Eternity; and, Young as you are, you may be called thither before you ever see old Age: Take heed then how you live: Take heed, as you live for Eternity, it be not for eternal Misery: Summon all your Powers to the Business of Religion: Nor let one Day pass that shall not give you Comfort in Death, and Hope beyond it.

THE aged have much more need to be diligent: you stand upon the very brink of Eternity, and Death stands over you with a Hand lift up and ready to strike you down to the Grave: Consider then, have you nothing to do? Has your time been so *well* employ'd? (it's well for you if it has.) Are your Graces full grown? Is there no need of an Addition to be made to them? Have you no Lusts to be more subdued? No blotted Evidences which shou'd be clear'd up? Say to yourselves, "Am
" I clean?"

SERM. I. "I clean? Is there *no spot in me?* Is there no
—— "Circumstance relating to my everlasting
"State which I have no Reason to complain,
"and tremble about?" O remember, it is but
a little Time, and all your Preparation for E-
ternity will be over: *Whatsoever* therefore your
Hands now find to do, for your Souls, and for
Eternity, do it with all your *Might*; for there
is no *Work*, nor *Device*, nor *Knowledge*, nor *Wis-*
dom in the *Grave* whither you are going. (Chap.
xi. 10.)





S E R M O N II.

The COMFORT and HAPPINESS of
True Believers.

JOHN XI. 26.

*And whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall
never die. Believest thou this?*

WHILE the Harbingers of Death are
abroad, and its Arrows flying all a-
round us; while one and another of our Friends
and Acquaintance are going to their long Home,
and we are following in the same Road, sure
to overtake them in the Grave at last, every
one in his own Order; its Time for us to con-
sider how the Terrors of Death may be abated,
and what Remedy may be had against the
Miseries of the World to come.

SERM.
II.

Now we have no help against the Death
of our Bodies; but the Words offer a certain
Remedy against the Death of our Souls: *Who-
soever liveth, and believeth in me shall never die.*
If you look back into the Context, you will
find

SERM. find that the Words were spoken to *Martha* at

II. her Brother's Death, *v. 23.* where our Lord says to her in a very kind and encouraging manner, *thy Brother shall live again*; and when *Martha* seemed to make light (*v. 24.*) of what our Lord had proposed as not enough for her Relief, he adds in the *25. verse*, that the Power of raising the Dead belonged to him: *I am the Resurrection, and the Life*; *he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live*; it follows immediately, in the Text, *And whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die*, or shall not die, for ever, as it may be read more properly.

In speaking to these Words, I shall enquire.

I. What we are to Understand by the Term, *liveth*.

II. What is the Import of the Word, *believeth*.

III. What the Phrase, *never die*, signifies.

IV. I shall shew whence it is, that they who *live and believe in Christ shall never die*.

I. What are we to understand by the Term, *liveth*. It must be one of these two Things,

(1.) Whatsoever living Man believes in me shall never die. Let him be of what Family,
or

or Nation he will, *Gentile or Jew*. God so loved the World, that he gave his only begotten Son, that WHOSOEVER believeth in him, should not perish but have everlasting Life. John iii. 16. SERM. II.

This Gospel is to be preached unto all Nations, and to every Creature under Heaven that is rational: The *Jewish* Nation will in a little Time be no longer the Peculiarity of Heaven: The Partition Wall is just breaking down: The Vail of the Temple is going to be rent in twain, and whatsoever living Man, all who want a Saviour, may have offers of Him, and Salvation by Him: But then observe here is a Limitation; whosoever that liveth, *i. e.* whatsoever living Man, or whosoever whilst he lives: The offer of Christ and Salvation is limited to the Time of our Abode here; for there are no acts of Faith beyond the Grave: This is the only state of Probation and Trial: Death Seals the Character of every Man, that is, they must continue such as they die: They that are unclean and filthy then, must be so still; and the unbelieving World must remain for ever so. But

(2.) Some have understood the Words, (tho' I think not so properly) whosoever lives spiritually, that is, whosoever is made alive to God by a new Principle infused into him from above, and is quickened from a Death in Trespasses and Sins: Whosoever is delivered from that State which has past upon all the Sons and Daughters of *Adam*, and is supported in a spiritual Life by the same Power that quickened him

SERM. him when spiritually Dead ; whoſeever thinks,
 II. or acts ſo as to deſerve the name of a living
 Man ; or every Soul that is made a Partaker of
 the new and divine Life : But it is the former
 Senſe in which I would chooſe to underſtand
 the Words.

II. I would enquire what is meant by believing in him. Now, believing in Chriſt implies theſe two Things,

(1.) A firm Perſuaſion of the Truth of what the Scriptures report, more eſpecially, concerning the Lord Jeſus Chriſt. Faith, ſtrictly taken in a Philoſophical Senſe, ſignifies a believing ſomething upon the Teſtimony of another : its humane Faith, when we believe upon the Teſtimony of Men : its divine Faith, when we believe upon the Teſtimony of God : Now, ſaving Faith has a Reſpect to the whole Revelation of God ; to all the Doctrines and Truths that are taught us in the Word of God ; to all the Precepts that are given us, the Promiſes, and Threatenings, and whatſoever God has made known to us in his Word : Faith receives all theſe with Reverence and Submiſſion, as if God himſelf was heard to ſpeak them : But ſaving evangelical Faith more particularly contains thoſe Things which relate to the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, as, the Prophecies that went before of him ; the Incarnation of his wonderful Perſon ; his Nature as God, and Man ; his Office as Mediator ; his Doctrine ; his Miracles ; his Death ; his Reſurrection ; his Aſcenſion ; his Interceſſion ;

Intercession; his Government of the World, and Church; and his coming again to Judge every Creature, and to distribute Rewards and Punishments to all according as their Works shall be: But farther, this Faith implies a Persuasion of our need of Christ; of his Suitableness and All-sufficiency; of his Willingness to save us from Sin and Hell; and of the Necessity of putting our Trust in him, that we may be received and delivered by him: Nay, it implies a Persuasion that, through Faith in his Name alone, we can be pardoned and set right with a just and holy God whom we have offended: Now, Faith teacheth us to view all these divine Revelations, and enables us to set to our Seal that they are the *true sayings of God*: If he hath said it, it is enough for the Believer: He rests therein upon the Truth, Power, Wisdom, and Goodness of God: his Assent is hearty: He saith, all that was spoken is True; Nay, that there is more in Christ than ever was spoken; for who can know all that Christ is, and has: The Christian knows that of Christ in the Promises that others don't know, and believes much from his own Experience.

(2.) The Souls Acceptance of him, and entire and hearty dependance upon him. He that believes, accepts of the Saviour as he is tendered: *John i. 12. To as many as received him, to them gave he Power to become the Sons of God, even to them that believe on his Name*: In which Passage, receiving Christ, and believing on him, are

SERM. are Words of the same Import: He that be-

II. lieves on Christ takes him, accepts him as his
 ——— Prophet and Teacher, for all that is to be
 learnt in order to fit him for the service of
 God here and the Enjoyment of him hereafter:
 He takes him for his great High Priest and In-
 tercessor, and readily resigns himself into the
 Mediator's Hands: he depends upon him, and
 is willing he should make Attonement and Re-
 conciliation by his Blood, and do all Things
 for his Pardon and Peace. The Soul also ac-
 cepts him as its King: It bows to him, and
 is willing to be subdued by his Power, and ruled
 by his Precepts: It commits it self to him for
 Strength in the Service of God, and for Sup-
 port and Preservation to eternal Glory: and
 then, the Soul is not only willing that Christ
 should do his whole saving Work upon it; but
 at the same time depends, under a Sense of its
 own Unworthiness, upon his doing all that,
 for which it has accepted him: Thus the Soul
 becomes satisfied that, as certainly as it does
 receive Christ, so certainly he will do all for
 it, both living, and dying, and after Death;
 that nothing shall fail of all that he has en-
 couraged it to hope for, that is, of all that he
 hath promised in the Gospel.

And, when the Soul has thus closed with
 Christ, it adheres to him, and lives upon him:
 by renewed acts of Faith it receives fresh Sup-
 plies from him, and still believes in him, do-
 ing all that it is called to: *It lives believing;*
the Life which I now live in the Flesh I live by
 the

the Faith of the Son of God, Gal. ii. 20. It dies SERM.
believing; *Lord Jesus receive my Spirit, Acts* II.
vii. 59. It will pronounce with holy Expecta-
tion that Christ will be nigh, and do the Office
of a Saviour for it when it comes to Extremi-
ties.

III. What does the Phrase, *never die*, signify. It may signify,

(1.) That the spiritual Life which is begun in such a Soul shall never die. 'Tis an immortal Principle, the off-spring of Heaven, and will always be the care of Heaven, and shall therefore last for ever. Such a one's *Seed remaineth in him*; nor can all the Skill and Rage, the Power, Violence, and Industry of Hell root it out: *We are confident of this, saith the Apostle, that he which hath begun a good Work in you, will perform it until the Day of Christ, Philip. i. 6.* He will not forsake the Work of his own Hands; nor suffer Satan to triumph over his Image in the Saints: Our Lord tells the Woman of Samaria, *Whosoever Drinks of the Water that I shall give him, shall never thirst: but the Water that I shall give him, shall be in him a Well of Water Springing up into everlasting Life. John iv. 14.* That Principle, which Christ forms in the Souls of his People, is a *Well of Water*, a constant Thing which shall ever last: It Springs up towards the Perfection of Heaven, and there only is it made Perfect: The Father has given them to the Son to be his Care; and he has undertaken the Care of them: of

SERM. *those that are given him he will lose none: Not*

II. *one of those many Sons shall fail being brought*
 ——— to Glory.

(2.) I take the true Sense of these Words, *shall never die*, to be this; that he shall never die the second Death, or shall not die eternally; and this indeed implies the former; for if the spiritual Life were lost he must certainly die the second Death: Thus the Words may very commodiously be render'd, shall not die for ever: They shall not die under the Sentence of Death which the Law of their Creator has pronounced upon all Sinners, and which they are fallen under because they are Sinners. Now, such is the Grace of God in Jesus Christ according to the Declarations of the Gospel, that as soon as they believe in him, immediately upon their receiving him, they are discharg'd from the Curse, to which they were as Sinners expos'd: *There is therefore now no Condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus: Christ has redeem'd them from the Curse of the Law being made a Curse for them*: They are justified by Faith in him, and God is reconciled hereupon: the Curse being removed, they are not to be used, and treated now as Sinners, with Respect to everlasting Life and Death: Their surety has made an attonement for them: God the Father has accepted it upon the Account of all True Believers, and thro' Faith it now becomes actually theirs: Nor shall they ever want the benefit of this Attonement according to the Gospel Tenor; but find the Advantage of

of it in their greatest Exigencies: God gave his Son, that whosoever believeth on him, shou'd not perish, yea tho' the Body remain under the Sentence of Death, as the Apostle assures us: Rom. vii. 10. If Christ be in you the Body, is dead because of Sin, and must submit to the Execution of it; yet, it shall at length be redeemed from the Power of the Grave, and the Soul shall not be hurt of the Second Death, that is, the Sting and Venom of the Curse shall never reach them. Again

(3) They shall never die, that is, They shall live for ever: For the Words properly signify more than is expressed; and so they import a Promise of eternal Life; This was the great Design of God when in the greatness of his Love he sent his Son to die for Sin, that *Whosoever believeth in him should not perish; but have everlasting Life*: There is a Life begun in them that knows no Period: It is a Life of Communion with the blessed God, a Life of Devotedness to him, and Complacence in him; This Life is already begun in their Souls, and Heaven is but the Perfection of it: The Sight of God there shall be instead of Faith; and higher Degrees of Devotedness to him, and joy in him.

I come now to enquire

IV. Whence it is that he, that lives and believes in Christ, shall never die.

SERM.

II.

(I.) The Redeemers undertaking was for this very End. This is the Alteration that was made in the Sinners Case by the Redeemer's coming, by his doing, and suffering so much for him: At first the Case stood thus with Man; the Law of his Creator required sinless Obedience, and threatened Death to him that failed, Gal. iii. 10. *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all Things that are written in the Book of the Law to do them*: The Sinner now was fallen under the Curse, and become in himself Helpless; but the Son of God comes in our Nature according to the gracious Promise of the Father; he obeys, and suffers, and then declares the Gospel, which is, *that he that believes shall be saved*, that is, from the Curse which the Law threatened to Sinners. *The Wages of Sin*, according to the Law of God, *is Death*; but the *Gift of God is eternal Life through Jesus Christ our Lord*, Rom. vi. 23. Thus is the Grace of God manifested to us in, and through Christ Jesus: it is expressly said to be the Thing that the Father Wills the Son to do, and the Thing that the Son undertook to do, *John vi. 40*. We are according to the Covenant of Works, and the Law of the Creator, utterly incapable of Salvation; for there is nothing *remains* for the Sinner under that, but a *certain fearful looking for of Judgment*, &c. But the Saviour has purchased, and wrought out a new Covenant, the Covenant of Grace, by which the Sinner may live through Faith in him: *If, says our Lord, I be lifted up I will draw all Men unto me*, Joh. xii.

xii. 13. so Rom. iii. 24, 25, 26. *being justified freely by his Grace through the Redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a Propitiation through Faith in his Blood, &c.*

(2.) The Believers Faith was wrought in him by the Spirit of God with this very Design that he might never die. So the Apostle says expressly, Gal. ii. 16. *Knowing that a Man is not justified by the Works of the Law, but by the Faith of Jesus Christ; even we have believed in Jesus Christ; that we might be justified by the Faith of Christ, that is, we were enabled to trust in Christ that we might have Justification through him, might be pardoned, and delivered from that Death which was threatened, and be begotten again to a lively Hope of eternal Life: And when the Apostle speaks, of their groaning as being burdened; What is it for? That mortality might be swallow'd up of Life: and then he adds, He that hath wrought us to the self same Thing is God: The Sense of the Argument is this; he who enabled us so firmly to believe in Christ as to conceive Hopes of eternal Life, and to be filled with holy and eager Desires after it; he hath wrought us to this Faith, (and to a consequent Hope and Desire) as our Preparation for a blessed Immortality. See 2 Cor. v. 4, 5. And indeed without this it is hard to say what good End Faith can serve: Why is Christ to be believed in; but that the Sinner may be justified, and entitled to eternal Life?*

SERM.

II.

(3) Christ has engaged his Word to his People for this, and hence they may be sure of it. He will not fail, or prove unfaithful: They never did, nor ever shall find him so: He bids his Disciples carry the Gospel through the World, and let this be the great Subject of their Preaching: *He that believes, and is baptized, shall be saved*: Accordingly they declared this in *Acts xvi. 31.* where, upon the distressed Jailors Enquiry, *What shall I do to be saved?* Paul and Silas replied; *believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.* And elsewhere the Apostle says, *with the Heart Man believes unto Righteousness*, *Rom. x. 10.* that is, so as to be justified, to be made and accounted righteous according to the Gospel Constitution: and we know, that our Lord himself has told us, *the Righteous shall enter into Life eternal*, *Mat. xxv. 46.* Now, these are the sayings of him who is the *Amen*, the Faithful and true Witness: He has faithfully brought us the Mind of his Father from Heaven, and told us all of it: He has done faithfully as Mediator all that he undertook with God for us; and we have this Additional Security, (if I may be allowed to say so,) that, unless he go on, and finish this Work, that which he hath already done will be so much lost Labour, which would be the grossest Absurdity to suppose.

I now come to make some practical Improvement of what has been said, and hence observe

[1.] The

[1.] The Necessity and Excellence of Faith. SERM.

II.

None but they and all they who do believe, shall be saved from the second Death. *He that believes not shall be damn'd*: are our Lord's own Words. *Mark xvi. 16.* So, elsewhere, *He, that believes not the Son, shall not see Life; but the Wrath of God abideth on him, John iii. 36.* And in the 18. ver. *He that believeth on him, is not condemned; but He that believes not is condemned already, is now in a State of Condemnation, and the Sentence of it will be publickly past and ratified upon every such Soul in the great Day: He will be considered not only as a Sinner against God his Creator; but as a Rejecter of the Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and so will perish with double Ruin: He will be treated as a wicked Contemner both of the Wrath and Grace of God. As Pardon, Life, and Glory are tender'd to believing Sinners; so to none else: Faith is the only way for the Sinners Relief: One Part of the Character of them who are excluded from the Jerusalem above is this, they are unbelieving, and so to have their Portion in the Lake that burns with Fire and Brimstone: which is the second Death, Rev. xxi. 8.*

And as this shews the Necessity, so also the Excellence of Faith. You shall not die for ever if you have it: We set a great Value ordinarily upon that which does us great Service, and is of great Use in important Cases; and what can be of so much Use to us as this? It is the Means of removing the Curse, and securing the Blessing: Besides, I might add, it is

SERM. the Parent of all other Graces, the Root from

II. whence they Spring, and the great Support of
 — them when they are sprung up, or else they
 must all die and perish: They fall or rise,
 are strong or weak, as this is in good Plight or
 otherwise. The Spiritual Life begins in Faith:
 It is by *Faith the Just live*: and at last they
 die in Faith: So much Faith as we have, so
 much real Christianity we have: and so far as
 we want Faith, so far we are no Christians:
 and an entire want of Faith is an entire want
 of Christianity. 'Tis by Faith we receive Christ,
 and become interested in him, in his Righte-
 ousness and Merits: And tho' there is no Vir-
 tue or Excellence in Faith it self to deserve
 such Blessings; yet it is the way in which God
 has thought fit to glorify himself, and save the
 Sinner. And indeed it is a very apt way; for
 by Faith we acknowledge the Gospel-Relief,
 that Salvation is entirely of Grace, and hum-
 bly and thankfully accept of it. As ever there-
 fore you hope to do well in your Profession of
 Christianity, look to your Faith, or you do no-
 thing at all in that Business: *Whosoever liveth,
 and believeth in Christ shall never die.* Now,

[2.] Let me ask you as our Lord asked *Martha*, *believest thou this?* dost thou believe the
 Scripture Reports concerning Christ, as sent of
 God to be the Teacher, the Saviour, and Ruler
 of the Church? concerning his Doctrine, Pre-
 cepts, and Promises? concerning thy own mi-
 serable Case till thou dost believe in him; and
 the happy Alteration that is hereupon imme-
 diately

diately made in thy State? Dost thou believe that through Faith in his Name Sinners are justified, and receive eternal Life? While I ask you these Questions, will you ask them your selves? And when you go from hence, ask them over again; It is a Question of great Importance: It implies no less than your being right or wrong for Eternity; and consequently your having well grounded Hopes, or Standing upon a false Bottom: Let me ask you further, and do you ask your selves; Do you believe this aright? Do you so believe it as to lead you to a thankful Acceptance of the Saviour, a willingness he should be yours, as Prophet, Priest, and King; and a willingness on your own part to be his, that he may teach and save and rule you? Is this belief only a dry speculative Opinion that Floats in the Head, or does it sink into your Hearts? Does it influence your Wills? Does it shed itself into all the Parts of your Conversation, so as to make you ever learning the Will of Christ, Obedient to it when known, and depending upon his Merit after all your Obedience, as that which must alone procure you Pardon and Acceptance, Preservation from Hell and an Interest in the future Glory? Now, if your Faith be right it will have these Fruits:

(1.) It will be attended with Humiliation and sorrow for Sin. You will be abash'd, and confounded at your selves to think you should ever commit such Offences against a holy God, that were not to be wiped out but by the Blood

of

SERM. of a Saviour. *They shall look upon him whom they*
 II. *have pierced, and mourn for him, as one for the*
 — *loss of an only Son, and be in Bitterness for him,*
as one that is in Bitterness for his First-Born, as
 the Prophet expresses it, when he is describing, under the Guidance of the Spirit, that Temper which shall take Place in the evangelical State. Zech. xii. 10.

(2.) It will be attended with an affecting Sense of your own need of Christ. This will always attend Faith in him! Thus it did in St. Peters Case: When our Lord put the Question, *Will ye also go away?* He answered, *Lo d, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the Words of eternal Life,* John vi. 67, 68. This was the desire of the great Apostle St. Paul, *That I may be found in him, not having my own Righteousness which is of the Law; but that which is by the Faith of Christ, the Righteousness which is of God by Faith.* Phil. iii. 9. Are you convinced that, as Sinners against God, you are lost and helpless in yourselves? that you can never come to God with any Hope; but through the Mediator? That he must recommend your Persons and Services to God, and procure your Pardon and Peace with him? Are you deeply sensible that he must satisfy divine Justice, appease divine Wrath, secure you from that Death which is the Wages of Sin, and procure for you that Eternal Life which is the Gift of God?

(3.) It will be accompanied with an high value of him. *To them who believe Christ is precious,* 1 Pet. ii. 7, And to the same purpose does
 the

the Apostle speak, Phil. iii. 8. *For whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but Dung that I may win Christ.* Does Faith shew the Glory of the Saviour, render him amiable, transcendently so in your Eyes, and kindly draw your Hearts to him? Is he become the chief of ten thousands, and altogether lovely to your Souls?

(4.) Your Faith in him will purify your Hearts. This is the Account which the Apostle gives of its Influence, when it was wrought in the Gentiles, *Acts xv. 9.* Does your Faith in Christ make Sin loathsome, and hateful to you? And put you upon vigorous Endeavours to break the Power of it? Does it make you groan under it as an intolerable Load and Burden to your Souls? Does it put you upon opposing, and watching against it; and make you cry earnestly for the Spirits aids to overcome it? Does it make you restless under the Remainers of it, pleased with every Advantage you get against it, and unsatisfied till you get clear of all Filthiness both of Flesh and Spirit?

(5.) It will work by Love. In Jesus Christ neither Circumcision, nor Uncircumcision availeth any thing, but Faith which worketh by Love, Gal. v. 6. Now, does it lead you to love God? Does it render him infinitely Excellent in your Eyes? Does it make you love the Saviour, and love him though you have not seen him? 1 Pet. i. 8. Does it make you love his People because of the Image of God imprest upon them, because they are plainly acted by the Spirit of Christ,

SERM.

II.

Christ, and carry upon them an evident Resemblance of him? Does it make you love his Ordinances, as the Means of the Souls converse with Christ, and his Appointments for conveying his Spirit and Grace unto you?

(6.) It will be accompanied with good Works. *Faith, if it have not Works, is dead, being alone, Jam. ii. 17, 18.* It receives Jesus Christ as Lord, to rule, and bow the Soul to his Authority; to make it diligent, serious, and unwearied in his Service; it owns him as a Prince, as well as a Saviour: The Believer is no less willing to be sanctified, and made Obedient; than to be justified and made righteous: These are necessarily joined together, as Life and Motion in a Man; where there is Life, there will be Motion; so where there is Faith, there will be Obedience: Thus for the second Head, ask your selves the Question our Lord ask'd *Martha, Believest thou this?*

[3.] If, upon Enquiry, you find your selves wanting and destitute of this Faith, labour after it. You had need to labour; for you are undone without it: And you have great Encouragement to labour; since your *Labour* in this Point *will not be in vain in the Lord.* But, perhaps you will say, what would you have us do? I answer,

(1.) Pray for it. You are bid to ask, that you may receive; to seek, that you may find; and to knock, that it may be opened unto you: And it is expressly promised, if you will do this, that you shall be answered; for he that asketh,

asketh, receiveth; he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened, SERM. II.

Mat. vii. 7, 8. You never ask'd any thing more agreeable to the Will of God than this: It is his Command that we *believe on the Name of his Son Jesus Christ*. Go then upon your Knees in secret, and cry mightily to God for it. Confess your own Weakness and Impotence in this Respect. Pray that he would help your Unbelief. Follow him with your Cries daily, and desist not, till you have what you want, till it is *given to you, to believe*. Prayer is the way in which the Soul is to draw down that Grace whereby God is to be serv'd, and honour'd.

(2.) Attend upon the Word preached. *Faith comes by hearing*, Rom. x. 17. The Word is the Instrument whereby the Spirit forms the Soul a new: *Of his own Will begat he us by the Word of Truth*, Jam. i. 18. God has put great Honour upon this Ordinance: when *Cornelius* wanted fuller Instruction in the way of Life, and the Doctrines of Salvation by Jesus Christ, an Angel is sent to him, not to instruct him; but to call for *Peter* to do it: (Acts x.) *Despise not these Prophecies*; but give diligent and constant Attendance upon them. *Sit at Wisdom's Gates, and watch at the Posts of her Doors*. Attend upon the Word as God's Word, and as that which he hath appointed to be the Means of conveying Life to Souls. But then,

[4.] If you find, upon Enquiry, that you are blessed with this Grace; that you have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, then (1.)

SERM.

II.

(I.) Thank God for it. It is what deserves your most grateful Acknowledgments. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with spiritual Blessings in heavenly Things in Christ*, Ephes. i. 3. You have a great deal of Reason to be thankful, if you consider whose Gift it is: Namely, God's: No meaner Hand could effect it: and should it not greatly affect your Souls, that the most high God wou'd take you into his Hands, and heal you; when otherwise you would have been lost and undone for ever? that he would put you out of the way of that Death which you stood exposed to, into the way of eternal Life and Blessedness? You could never do any thing that had the least shadow of Merit to deserve it: Nay, you were under such Circumstances as were extremely provoking and offensive to God: You had been Sinners, nay Contemners of the Grace of God, and unthankful for the Offers of that Grace: This Faith that has been bestowed upon you, is precious Faith; valuable in it self, and much more so in its Consequences: What Obligations are you under to the blessed God, who has singled you out to be the Objects of his Grace? How many are there in the same Town, and Neighbourhood; in the same Congregation and Family; nay, in the same Pews with your selves, that have heard the same Sermons, and enjoyed the same outward Means and Priviledges, who are yet as hard as ever; whilst you are in the happy number of Humble Penitent Believers? O, bless
the

the kind Hand that has done so much for you. SERM.
Can you forbear crying out, Lord, why to me II.
is this Grace given?

(2.) Take the Comfort of what he has done for you. *If God be for you who can be against you? Who shall lay any thing to the Charge of God's Elect?* Rom. viii. 31, 33. You may now go to God in Jesus Christ as your God through him. You may rejoice in him as your Portion and Inheritance, and depend upon him for Pardon of daily Infirmities; for Grace to strengthen you to mortify the Remainders of Corruption, to quicken you in Duty, to grow in the Divine Image and likeness, to preserve you from Temptations, and to enable you to resist and overcome them; for Grace to bear Afflictions, to improve Providences, to keep you safe from an evil World, and to be with you in your Passage through it; you may go to him for Grace to support you in dying Moments, to acquit you at his Bar, and give you eternal Life and Glory.

You may act Faith in Jesus Christ in these and in every other Case, and so have your Lives in a great Measure comfortable: For will not, he who *hath given you his Son, with him, also freely give you all things?* Rom. viii. 32.

(3.) Walk worthy of what you have received, *worthy of the Vocation wherewith you are called*, Ephes. iv. 1. You are called to Faith: You owe more to God upon that Account than others do, and should make better returns than others. Why should so much more be done for

SERM. for you, if you are not better than they? should

II. not your Conversation and Behaviour be Superior to others? should not your Love be warmer? your Zeal more fervent? your Resolutions more steady? and your Fruitfulness in every good Work greater and more Apparent?

(4.) Endeavour to be *strong in Faith*, that so you may *give Glory to God*. Rom. iv. 20. Faith in a Vigorous Plight will keep you steady, and prevent your staggering when the greatest Difficulties are in your way, and the heaviest Burdens lie upon you. This will confirm you when Things look discouraging and dark all around you. It must be kept strong and vigorous by Influences derived from above, even, from *Jesus the Author and Finisher of your Faith*; but it is only to be expected in the way of your Duty: Pray to him therefore, as the Disciples, *Lord increase our Faith*, Luke xvii. 5. Trust not to what you have; though you should always remember to be thankful for it: Forget the Things that are behind, and press towards the Mark, that you may be able to believe the Promises of God against all Appearances to the contrary. It was the Glory of *Abraham's Faith* that *he believed in Hope against Hope*. Rom. 4. 18.

(5.) Pity and pray for them who have it not, and do what you can for their Relief. They are indeed piteous Objects: to be without Faith is to be out of the Favour of God; for *without Faith it is impossible to please God*, (Heb. ix. 6.) and to be out of the Favour of God is to be

to be under the Power of Sin, under the Wrath and Curse of God, and Strangers to every Covenant Blessing. Can you see those about you, near and dear to you, and not have Compassion for them? Have you dry Eyes when you remember them before the Throne of Grace in your Retirement? O pour out your Souls to God upon their Account: Sin not in ceasing to pray to God for them; (*O that Ishmael might live before thee!*) instruct them in the Nature of this Grace, encourage them to it, and leave nothing unattempted that may do them good.

(6.) Long for the time when Faith shall be changed into Sight; when you shall *receive the End of your Faith*, as the Apostle calls it, *even the Salvation of your Souls*, 1 Pet. i. 9.

Though there are a great many Pleasures and Advantages that attend our living by Faith above living only by Sense; yet the highest Degrees of Faith are low, and mean, compared with the Joys and Transports of the Blessed above. Faith is design'd to serve us instead of sight, and therefore it is called the *Evidence of things not seen*; (Heb. xi. 1.) but alas! How weak and wavering is it? How subject to Objections, Doubts, and Tremblings? How many Uneasy Days and Hours does the Unsteadiness of it frequently occasion? O long for that Day and Hour when it shall be turned into Substance and Vision: How desirable will it then be, to see the Throne of God, and that in all its splendor? to have the Mind no more pester'd

E

with

SERM. with Doubts and Fears; and to taste, and feel
II. what we now only believe? Faith gives the
—— Soul now many a reviving View of Christ:
but what will it have when it comes to *see* the
Saviour; to *love*, and be *beloved* of him in the
most desirable Manner to all Eternity?





S E R M O N III.

The ART of Numbering our DAYS.

*Consider'd in a S E R M O N upon the sorrowful
Occasion of the Death of Mrs. E. G.*

P S A L M XC. 12.

*So teach us to number our Days, that we may
apply our Hearts to Wisdom.*

THE supreme Disposer of all Things, SERM. III.
for Reasons known only to himself, of-
ten calls away those Persons, who appear to us
capable of doing much Service in the World
and Church, even in the midst of their Days,
and when they are just ripened into a Readiness
to enter upon the Work.

While we, with Silence and Submission, a-
dore these Depths of Divine Counsel, we are
to attend the loud Calls of Providence to con-
sider how short and uncertain a thing Life is,
and to act accordingly, lest our Lives be gone
before our Work be done, and our Souls sink
under the Weight of contracted Guilt, into e-
ternal Misery.

SERM.

III.

The Funerals of those, who are cut off in the Bloom of Youth, are so many Warnings to us, to number our Days, and apply our Hearts to this important Point of Wisdom; *viz.* the making Preparation for our own Removal: for when we change Worlds, *our* state will be unalterably fix'd, as well as *theirs*; according as our Temper and Behaviour has been during our state of Probation here. And our stay in Life may be as short, our Removal out of it as surprizing, as theirs. They who have applied their Hearts to Wisdom, gain by Death a perfect Freedom from the Toils and Guilt, which attend them here; all that remains for them is Rest, and Joy, and Glory: But Indignation and Wrath, Tribulation and Anguish await every Soul that leaves the World without attending seriously to the great Ends of its Creation.

The call of Providence is now, methinks, very awful and affecting to us, to apply our Hearts unto Wisdom, while the Number of the Wise is so small, and these are taken away so fast. How many choice Ones has this Society lost in the Compass of a few Months? and what can be the meaning of this, but to put us upon reckoning that our Days are few, frail, and uncertain; and that we set our selves to employ them wisely in providing for what is before us. May we all join heartily with the Psalmist in his Request, *So teach us to number, &c.*

For

For the better understanding of these Words, SERM.
it will not be amiss to observe that this *Psalms* III.

plainly refers to that sad story of the *Israelites* unbelief, murmuring and Rebellion upon the evil Report of the Spies, and the fore Judgments denounced by God against them for that Reason; that they should wander forty Years in the Wilderness, and after all, their Carcasses should fall there, nor should they reach the promised Land which they had despised. The Story you have at large, *Numbers* xiv. The *Psalms* is a Prayer of the holy Penman, which seems designed to assist the *Israelites* to submit to, and improve this awful Providence, by leading them into a Sense of their Sin, and Repentance for it.

The Words, I have read, are a Petition enforced with an Argument: The *Psalmist* both prays and pleads.

1. He prays, *So teach us to number our Days;* or, as the Original may be read, *make us to know to number.* The Word here is the same that we have, *Psal.* xxxix. 4. *Lord, make me to know my End.* q. d. " Let the Grace of God set
" in with this very affecting Dispensation of
" thine towards us, that we may be led seri-
" ously to consider, and make a just Account
" of the shortness of our Lives, while we see
" the narrow Bounds to which thou hast limited
" them, and may reckon upon the certain Con-
" clusion of them within the time which thou
" hast peremptorily fixed."

SERM.

2. He pleads; *That we may apply our Hearts*

III.

unto Wisdom. Or according to the Hebrew, that we may *cause our Hearts to come to Wisdom.* He begs divine Teaching, because they will be able to make so great Advantage thereby, and seems to intimate, that unless they were thus taught of God, they should remain as foolish and froward, as inconsiderate and unbelieving as ever they were. q. d. "If thou wilt but teach us this divine "Arithmetick we shall learn (stupid as these "Hearts of ours are) to make a wise Improvement of thy various Dealings with us, both "Merciful and Afflictive; but, if we are not "thus enlightened and taught from above, we "shall grow worse and not better, till we are "quite undone (both for Time and Eternity) "by our Folly." I shall consider these two Heads a little distinctly.

I. We are to look into the *Psalmist's* Petition, *So teach us to number our Days.*

II. The Reason and Ground of it; and that is taken from the Advantage he promises himself they should gain, if the Petition were granted. *That we may apply our Hearts to Wisdom.*

I. We are to consider the *Psalmist's* Petition, *So teach us to number our Days.* Wherein we have

[1.] The Lesson he would be taught.

[2.] The Manner how he would be Taught

it.

[1.] We

[1.] We have the Lesson he would learn, SERM.
to number his Days. We cannot suppose him III.
here praying for a particular Knowledge of the
term of Life; this is what a good Man is not
so much concerned to know, nor is it the mat-
ter of his Prayer; it wou'd favour more of a
vain Curiosity than a serious Spirit, that is
chiefly desirous to make the best use of the Time
appointed, whether it be less or more. The
exact Bounds of Life are a Secret, which the in-
finitely wise God has seen fit to conceal from
the Sons of Men; nor has he any where given
us Encouragement to enquire after it: It is no
part of a Persons Piety to busy himself in *num-*
bering his Days in this Sense; nor would it serve
any pious Purpose, that I know of, if, by search-
ing he could reduce this to the greatest Certainty.
And therefore, I conclude, it was not this
the *Psalmist* begs to be Taught; for he was with-
out doubt a Man of God, and begs this Instruc-
tion as a mean of bringing his Heart to Wis-
dom: barely to know the particular term of
Life would not render him Wise, that is, Re-
ligious. But he was desirous to know these se-
veral Things about it.

(1.) The shortness of it. He does not say,
teach us to number our Years, but Days; for
it is not safe for us to account upon too much
least we be mistaken in the Computation: and
the Life of Man may, when broken into such
little Parts as Days, be easily reckoned up;
which plainly shews there is no room to think
it very long. A few Figures will express the

SERM. whole number of our Days; and they may be

III. easily counted over: therefore he desires to be
 — made sensible of it, and that he may reckon of
 the thing as it is: And he is the more concerned to do so because Man's Life in Scripture is frequently compared to things of the shortest Duration, v. 5, 6. They are as a sleep *i. e.* Time passeth unobserved by us, and we think it but short when it is gone; or it is vanished like a Dream when we awake. *In the Morning they are like Grass which groweth up; in the Morning it flourisheth, in the Even it is cut down and withereth.*

As this is fresh and flourishing in one part of the Day; but dead and withering in the other; such is the Frailty of Man who in as short a Time falls from a vigorous Health into a state of Languishing and Death. *All Flesh is Grass.* Isa. xl. 6. This is never long lived: a few Weeks, at most, will put a Period to it. Our Days are said to be *swifter than a Post, and flee away*, Job ix. 25. his Stages are but short and he hurries through them: Nay, *swifter than a Weavers Shuttle*, Job vii. 6. Which no sooner has well entered one side of the Web, but it is out on the other: It is compared to a *Shadow* (and as if that were too much) *declining*, Psal. cii. 11. to an *Hand Breadth* (which is one of the most scanty Measures,) and *as nothing* if compared to Eternity, Psal. xxxix. 5.

Scripture every where abounds with such affecting Representations of this sort as plainly shew that it is our Duty thus to reckon of Life,
 and

and consequently, that a pious Mind will be desirous to do so. SERM.
III.

(2.) That he may be strongly impress'd with a Sense of the uncertainty of Life. A thousand Avenues are always open to let in Death upon us, which lies in wait ready to surprize us what way soever we turn: Our make is so frail that we are *crushed before* (sooner than) *the Moth*, Job iv. 19. And indeed if we consider the fineness of our Composition, how many thousands of Glands, Fibres, Nerves, Tendons, &c. there are upon which Life depends, how tender and minute these are, how easily they may be quite unfitted for their proper Offices, and how many Accidents always surround us, by which our Lives are exposed; we may well think our selves concerned to look upon Life as very uncertain. We are taught by the Holy Spirit to account it as *a Flower of the Field*, Psal. ciii. 15. in the Morning it opens and spreads it self with a most beautiful and fragrant Flourish: How gay does it shine in a rich Variety of Colours? But one cold Blast, or one scorching Day tarnisheth all its Glory, makes it droop and hang the Head and die. And very oft we find nothing more is necessary to make the strongest Constitution give way and sink into Ruin. We often hear of Persons dropping down dead, who, to Appearance, were healthy and vigorous but a few Hours before; of which Alteration no Reason at all can be assigned by Us. No Age, no Health, no Wisdom, nor Care in the Conduct of our selves,
nor

SERM. nor skill of others can prevent these Strokes
 III. or recover from them; all which shew how
 ——— necessary it is that, in numbering our Days,
 we should reckon them uncertain.

(3.) That he may seriously consider the approaching Period of Life. Because, tho' this be not known, yet it is very certain: the Prayer evidently supposeth that our Days will have an End; otherwise there would be no room to desire divine Instruction for the numbering them. He would have the awful Sentence denounced upon Man immediately upon his revolt from God [*Dust thou art, and unto Dust thou shalt return*] fixt upon his Mind: Since he must die by the Appointment of Heaven, he would revolve it in his Thoughts, and have it frequently in View as certain and unavoidable. It can be of no Service to him to put that out of his Sight, which will not thus be kept off one Moment, nor will Preparations for it be thus helped forward, nor the Stroke of it be better born.

Since God will not discharge him from the suffering of Death, he will not think himself at Liberty from the Thoughts of it. He will ask himself (as God hath taught him, *Psal. lxxxix. 48.*) *What Man is he that liveth and shall not see Death? shall he deliver his Soul from the Hand of the Grave?* q. d. "Who of human Race is there that has the Breath of Life in him that shall not see Death? What part of the World is such a Man to be found in? Where upon Earth is there a Person so privileged?
 "there

“ there is no such a One, No: all shall see it, SERM.

“ not only in their Towns, Neighbourhood, III.

“ Acquaintance, and Families so as to cost ~~————~~

“ them many a Groan and Tear; but every

“ One shall see it prevail against himself, feel

“ its stroke and sink under it down to the Dark-

“ ness, Silence and Putrefaction of the Grave.

(4.) That he may be taught to know what great Things he has to do, in these Days of Life, and of how great Importance those Interests were which depended upon the Things he had to do. That he has an immortal Spirit to be renew'd after the Image of God and made meet for his Presence and Glory; that this is a Work of great Difficulty, takes in a vast Compass, and will require all the Skill and Strength he has, and more than all *his own*. He prays also to be taught that an awful Eternity of Happiness or Misery hangs upon the doing or not doing this in the present Life.

All the Room we have to prepare for that Futurity lies within the Compass of this short uncertain Life; for afterwards there is nothing can be done to make an Alteration in our State. We must stand or fall by what has been done because our Probation determines with our Lives.

(5.) He would learn to compare aright his Work and Time together. To know whether his Work was advanced and in forwardness proportioned to the Days he had lived, what Defects there have been in his Diligence, and whether his Work has not stood still, whilst his Days have been upon the Wing: that he may
be-

SERM. bethink himself of correcting Mistakes, doub-
 III. ling his Diligence and Care that his Work and
 ——— Time may keep equal Paces.

He would be taught this Lesson that he may be lead seriously to consider what is yet to be done, or done better; what is wanting in his Graces or Duties; and what room he has for the Dispatch of these Things. How his Work may best and soonest be done, because his Days are drawing fast towards a Period, and he knows not but his *Sun* may *be gone down* before the Business of Life be finished.

[2.] We have the manner how he would be taught this, intimated in the Particle [*so*] *so teach*, or, *make me to know*. It deserves our Observation that the Psalmist (tho' they were under a very affecting Dispensation of Providence, and saw the daily Executions of Justice upon their Neighbours and Brethren for Sin) fears all this would be lost upon them, if they were not helped by the Teachings of Heaven. " Oh let thy Rod and Grace co-operate;
 " otherwise our unbelief and hardness of Heart
 " will no more be cured by the heaviest and most
 " astonishing Strokes of thy Wrath, then they
 " have been by the Miracles of Mercy wrought
 " for us: Let thy Spirit work powerfully in
 " Conjunction with these Severities, and then
 " we hope to find an happy Alteration in our
 " Spirits. Our Friends drop one after another,
 " and our Days are not yet numbered, nor do
 " we apply our Hearts to Wisdom: We shall
 " never do it unless that divine Spirit, whose
 " Work-

“ Workmanship we are, and who only has Ac- SERM.
“ cess to our Hearts, will enlighten and heal III.
“ our Souls: We implore his Teachings that
“ so we may profit.”

He does not Pray.

(1.) That we should have a bare notional Knowledge of what we have mentioned. We need not pray for it: there are none of us but know we must die, and die soon, that we have no Lease of Life, but may be called away in a Moment without the least warning.

All know that they have no Security from the sudden Arrests of Death: but what Good will all this do in the World whilst it is but a cold Notion? What is more common than to hear Persons talk of Death in all these Respects, who yet are as far from applying their Hearts to Wisdom as if they had never heard of any Improvement to be made of such Truths. A Barren Notion of this, only for the Entertainment of his Thoughts, is not what the Man of God desires to be Taught. But,

(2.) He desires that he may so be taught to number the Days of his Life as *seriously to consider the Matter*. That he may have deep and fixed Thoughts about it, consider whether his Conduct agrees with his Apprehensions, and as a Reasonable Creature may look before him. It is a strange Infatuation that Sinners lie under, that tho' their Everlasting Happiness depends upon their doing this, tho' it is the great Business of Life, tho' it is that for which the Reasonable Nature was given them, tho' this

is

SERM. is of so much concern that if it be not thought
 III. of it will render all other thinking to no Purpose, tho' this is that, which, if rightly thought of, will lead in the End to everlasting Blessedness, yet Sinners are most averse to consider it; Sensible of this the Man of God prays, so teach us this Art of computing our Days; with serious Thoughtfulness as the Case requires.

(3.) *So teach us to number them as frequently to do it.* As slighty and superficial Thoughts are unsuitable to this weighty Concern, no less are those which seldom return upon our Minds. This should be the almost constant Employment of our Minds. It requires not only our *serious* Thoughts, but a great *many* of them. To adjourn such Things to now and then, is to hazard their being learnt at all, or to any Purpose. *So teach us* that we may learn to Live with dying Thoughts; and tho' we cannot always have these Thoughts actually upon our Minds; yet their Returns should be very quick, and our Actions should always be directed and regulated as if they were never out of our Minds.

(4.) Teach us so powerfully this Lesson as that we shall be disposed to a Correspondent Behaviour. It is certainly a practical Regard to the short and uncertain Term of Life that he is principally desirous to learn: and nothing but Grace from Heaven can effect this: that perverse and froward Spirit, which had baffled so many and wonderful Means of Reformation,

formation, would be but where it was, if God SERM.
by his Grace did not sanctify the Stroke. He III.
was very Apprehensive that the Understand-
ings and Judgments of Sinners may be overcome, while their wicked Wills stand it out, and their Hearts and Lives remain unchanged: He therefore prays so teach us as shall influence our Practice.

II. We come now to consider the Plea with which he enforces his Petition, and that is the Advantage he promises himself they should reap, if it were granted. *That we may apply our Hearts to Wisdom.* Here it will be proper to enquire

[1.] What this *Wisdom* is, to which he would have their Hearts applied.

[2.] How the *numbering our Days* conduces to the *Application of the Heart to Wisdom.*

[1.] What are we to understand by *Wisdom*, which the *numbering their Days* would assist them in applying their Hearts to? In general by *Wisdom* he means true Religion. The Holy Scriptures very frequently have the Word in this Sense. *The fear of the Lord, that is Wisdom,* Job xxviii. 28. *Her ways are ways of Pleasantness and all her Paths are Peace,* i. e. *Wisdoms,* Prov. iii. 13; 17. Religion is there represented under the Character of *Wisdom*. So Mat. xi. 19. *Wisdom is justified of her Children.* And we find nothing in the Holy Dialect more common than for a Sinner to be called Fool, and a Religious Man Wise. Religion must be *Wisdom*; for it

is

SERM. is the Knowledge, Love, Pursuit, and only
 III. way of attaining the most excellent Good, the
 ——— only means of removing the greatest Evil,
 the best support under, and that which lessens
 every sorrow. In one Word to be Religious,
 is to be Wise for our selves, and in that where-
 in we are most concern'd.

The Character, or Notion of Wisdom you
 may take under the following Heads

(1.) 'Tis to pass a right Judgment upon
 Things. To value them according to their
 real and intrinsic Worth, or their Importance
 to us: carefully to observe what there is in
 them, which should lessen or increase their
 Value, and to esteem them proportionally.
 Those things which are durable, certain, per-
 fective of our Nature and Felicity claim the
 highest Regards of a reasonable Mind: and
 those which are injurious to our noblest Powers
 and debase them, that are prejudicial to or de-
 structive of our final Happiness are to be ab-
 hor'd and avoided.

(2.) Another branch of Wisdom is to make
 the best Provision we can against the greatest
 the most certain and most lasting Evil,
 though Future; even at the expence of a short
 uncertain, and mean though present Good.

(3.) Wisdom directs to pursue the greatest *i.e.*
 the most certain, suitable, satisfying, and dur-
 able Good, though some short, and little Dif-
 ficulties lie in the Way of it. The common
 Maxims of humane Prudence teach us, cheer-
 fully to encounter little Dangers where there

is but a Probability of succeeding to great Advantages, which, when attain'd will amply recompense all the Inconveniencies that attended us in the way to them: that we should not grasp at a present low and short-liv'd good when it will issue in great and irreparable Loss: that we rather forego or part with a little at present when we have a Prospect of Returns hereafter vastly to our Advantage, and we always reckon that the greater Gainers we shall be, and the more certain we are of that Gain, the more reasonable it is to sacrifice a present inferiour good in hopes of it.

SERM.
III.

These now are the Characters of Wisdom, and in them you have the main Strokes of Religion both as it is in the Heart and Life. My next Work is to shew how the *Numbering our Days* conduces to the *Application of the Heart to Wisdom* which is the

[2.] Branch of this general Head and

(1.) This *numbering our Days* will assist us in correcting our Mistakes, and in rectifying the Errors of our Judgments. We are apt to over rate Honours, Wealth, Pleasure, (natural or acquired Endowments of the Body or Mind;) but by such a Computation of our Days we are disposed and helped to judge truly about them, by throwing off those false and flattering Colours in which they are disguised, whereby they are very forcibly recommended to our Imaginations, and by which they unhappily, too often, gain the Ascendant over our Judgments.

F

While

SERM. While Life appears a short uncertain Thing, we
 III. easily see that these Things can't be fix'd and
 ——— settled upon us: We must soon shut our Eyes, and
 turn our Backs upon them: They cannot therefore be so valuable as we are apt to represent them to ourselves; where there is so little Certainty and Duration. And when this is well considered we can't bribe our Judgments to give Sentence in their Favour. And in Proportion, as present and sensible Things sink whilst we thus number our Days, spiritual and invisible Things will rise into a just Regard. In them we find a *Certainty* on which our Minds may repose themselves without fear of a Disappointment; for the Rewards of Religion are what *God, who cannot lie, hath promised*: And here is Duration too; *for he that doth the Will of God abideth for ever*, 1 John ii. 17.

So that nothing tends to beget in us a more just Esteem for the best Things by shewing us the Importance and Excellence of them, or to lessen our Value for worldly good Things by shewing them to us as they really are than thus to *number our Days*. And

(2.) By Consequence *this numbering our Days* must conduce to the Regulation of our Affections and Endeavours. As we value things, so shall we desire and love 'em, or just the contrary. The Affections are used to move, brisk or dull, as the Esteem rises or falls, and in the same Proportions we do, or do not employ our selves in a zealous pursuit and endeavour to compass
 and

and secure such an apprehended Good to our selves. So that he who has well learnt the shortness and uncertainty of Life is greatly assisted to know what things deserve his Affection, Desire, Study and Toil, and what do not; and in what Degrees he may love and seek them, namely, so far as they will promote the welfare of the nobler immortal Part of him, which must shortly be separated from what we see and converse with now, and be for ever Happy or Miserable according as that state was prepared for, or neglected.

Now, by way of Reflection, if we consider the Occasion of these Words they shew us

(1.) How much good Men look upon themselves concern'd to improve the Providences of God towards themselves and others, so far as they fall under their Notice. They reckon that both his Smiles and Frowns carry some Instruction along with them; what this is, they are desirous to know and comply with. We may suppose that *Moses* was now retired from the Noise of the Camp, to consider of what he had seen amongst the *Israelites*, and what he had heard from God concerning them, and then he prays as here in the Text. *So teach us, &c.*

(2.) That the most awful and surprizing Strokes of divine Providence will not of themselves make us Wise. They will all be lost upon us if the Spirit of God set not in with them. They may terrify; but they will not

SERM. change our Souls. What Executions were daily
 III. (almost) done upon this Rebellious People?

— And yet their Spirit and Behaviour appears unreformed. And if we look nearer our selves, don't we find it so? How many are called away who sat with us in the House of God? Our Congregations, and Seats are thin'd and we are never the Wiser: Our Acquaintance, Friends, and Relations gone; but our Days are not numbered. The Arrows of Death have struck those who stood very near us, and they are yet flying; but what have we learnt from all this? Does not our stupidity tell us that the Operations of the divine Spirit must effect our Cure, or we shall never have it?

(3.) Then surely we are very apt to misreckon in *numbering our Days*. Our Inclinations to Live, and Aversions to begin the proper Business of Life sadly over rule our Judgments, and make us unwilling to compute our Days as we ought.

(4.) If the right *numbering our Days* does conduce so much to Wisdom, then we may infer that we should give all Diligence in the Learning this Art. It well deserves, and will reward all our Care: For it is the way appointed of God for gaining Wisdom, the way which He will succeed and bless, and out of which his Assistance is not to be expected.

(5.) If the *numbering our Days* conduces thus to Wisdom, we may hence Learn, how it comes to pass that there are so many Mistakes in the
 World,

World, and so much Folly committed in re- SERM.
spect of our best Interests. We don't attend III.
as we ought to the shortness and uncertainty of
Life. The rich Fool did not, or he reckoned
by a Rule which was very false. To the want
of this its owing that the wicked Live in one
continued Mistake and that Good Men them-
selves fall into so many.

(6.) The best Method of Learning this Art
is, by fervent Prayer to ask it of God. A
Mind disposed to Prayer is best prepared for,
and most likely to learn it. Let us all go then,
and beg of God that he would give us this
Wisdom; for *he gives liberally to those who ask*
and upbraids not, Jam. i. 5. He only can set
these Things in so clear a Light as shall lead
us to make a suitable Application of them to
our own Souls, as they are certain and of the
last Importance to us.

Then shall we be ready to follow our dear
Friend, who has now done with a frail and un-
certain Life, during which she applied her self
in a very high Degree to the truest Wisdom.
God had bestow'd on Her a Mind of an un-
common size, which I have Reason to believe,
He sanctified betimes, in her very Childhood.
Such serious Impressions were made upon her,
as, through Grace, were not worn off to the
very last, but were sensibly improving as I
have good Grounds to believe both from my
own Observation, and the Reports of such as
were more intimately conversant with her. She

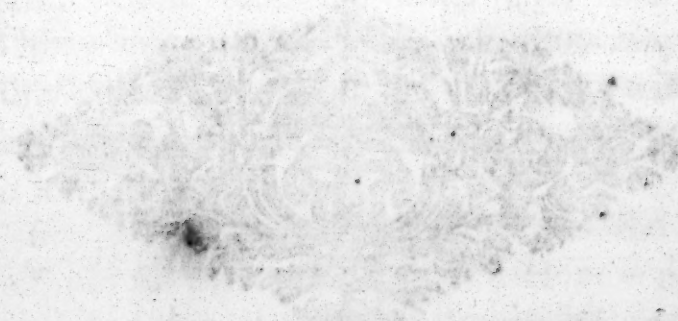
SERM. was nicely careful in guarding Conscience from
III. Wounds and Grievs, and in keeping it tender
 and sensible. I shall not easily forget with
 what Distrust and Jealousy she first approach-
 ed the Table of the Lord; how earnest for Sa-
 tisfaction in some such Circumstances as I fear
 the generality of Communicants would have
 never boggled at; and would with much con-
 cern reflect upon her neglecting so long to re-
 cognize her Baptismal Vow in a solemn and
 publick Manner. This I rather mention to
 quicken young Persons who are well inclined,
 not to delay this important Duty, and so pre-
 pare matter of Uneasiness for themselves a-
 gainst those Moments when they shall see
 Things in a proper Light. A time may pos-
 sibly come when your having done it will not
 satisfy you under the Convictions of having
 so long neglected it.

She was very Sollicitous even to the very
 last not to entertain degrees of Hope concern-
 ing her spiritual State, but what she could see
 solid Ground for, which it pleased a merciful
 God to shew her before she died, as appears
 by some of her last Words, wherein she de-
 clared, that it had not been in vain she had
 sought the Lord, that she had Comforts the
 World cou'd not give, that He had promis'd
 not to forsake her and she found he was a Co-
 venant keeping God, who would be with her
 in the Valley of the shadow of Death, often
 crying, *Come Lord Jesus, come quickly.* May

we by *numbering our Days* be led to that *Wis-* SERM.
dom which will be of so much Use to us in III.
a time of greatest Necessity, support us under
the Apprehensions of Death and in the Agonies
of it too, that we may die in Peace and by do-
ing so enter into a glorious State of Life, Light,
Love, and Peace everlasting.



The art of anatomy was discovered by
 we are now enabled to see the heart in that will-
 dom which will be of great use to us in
 a time of great distress, when we are
 the application of blood and in the
 at it that we may be able to do
 up to the point of the heart
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SERMON IV.

The Extremity of his PEOPLE, God's
OPPORTUNITY.

GENESIS XXII. 14.

*And Abraham called the Name of that Place
Jehovah-jireh, as it is said to this Day, in
the Mount of the Lord it shall be seen.*

IN the preceding part of the History contain-
ed in this Chapter, its hard to say, which is
most surprizing, God's Command to *Abraham* to
Sacrifice his Son; or *Abrahams* chearful and ready
Compliance with it. As soon as God has given
the Command He sets about the Performance of
it without Grumbling, Objection, or Delay; He
knows the Divine Injunctions are not to be
disputed; He won't therefore suffer carnal Rea-
son to suggest, "If I must offer up my *Isaac*,
what then will become of thy Promise?"
Nor wou'd he allow even natural Affection it
self to urge, "Lord, if I must part with him,
" yet

SERM.
IV.

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2 leaves

SERM. "yet so far indulge me, that not my own,

IV. "but another Hand may perform the bloody

———"Duty." No, God had commanded *Abraham* to offer up his Son himself; he therefore resolves both to do *what* God had commanded, and *as* he had appointed. Nor do we find, that he had made *Sarah* acquainted with the Order that God had here given Him; but rose up early in the Morning, and when He came within sight of the Place, he leaves his Servants behind Him, and takes only *Isaac* and other Things necessary for the Sacrifice along with Him: Hence we may observe that when we are to engage in the worship of God, we should carefully endeavour to disengage and free our selves from every thing that is like to distract or hinder Us from a careful and serious Attention to what we are about. As they were going along *Isaac* observing that they had every thing ready but the Sacrifice it self, enquires, *where is the Lamb for a Burnt-Offering?* A Question which doubtless awakened in faithful *Abraham* all the tenderest Resentments of an affectionate Father. He gives him only this general Answer, that God would provide himself a Lamb for the Burnt-Offering. When they were come to the Place which God had told him of, and had built an Altar there, and laid the Wood in Order, he binds *Isaac* his Son and lays him upon the Altar on the Wood, he stretches forth his Hand (that trembled with Age, but directed by a Soul steadfastly resolv'd to obey God

in

in the most difficult Instance,) and took the SERM.
sacrificing Knife, just upon giving the Blow, IV.
doubtless with such Thoughts as these, “ Lord, —
thou hast said that thou art my *Shield and my ex-*
ceeding great Reward, and that my *Seed shall be*
as the Stars of Heaven, and that thou wouldst
establish thy Covenant with Isaac, and with his
Seed after him; and yet thou now hast com-
manded me to offer him up for a Burnt-offer-
ing; this, I own I can’t understand; how it
can be consistent with thy Promise; but how-
ever I’m sure thy Word shall not fail; for
thou canst as easily restore him to me again by
a miraculous Resurrection, as thou didst at first
give him by an extraordinary Conception; and
therefore without the least Unwillingness, or
distrust of thy Promise I do return him to thee,
who hast till now lent him me.”

And now the tragical Execution had certain-
ly come on, had not Heaven kindly inter-
posed, and stay’d the falling Hand by a hasty
call, *Abraham, Abraham*; the Ingemination of
which is thought by Expositors, to be de-
sign’d for the more effectual exciting *Abrahams*
Attention, and for preventing the Dispatch of
God’s late command to him: this is followed
with a countermand, *Lay not thine Hand upon*
the Lad, neither do thou any thing unto him;
whereupon God commends his constant Faith
and Obedience. *Abraham* immediately spies
the Provision God had made of another sort for
the Sacrifice, *a Ram caught in the thicket by his*
Horns;

SERM. *Horns*; this he takes and offers to God instead

IV. of his Son, and thus we are brought to the

— Words of the Text; for *Abraham* reflecting, with a Heart full of Gratitude, on the surprising Goodness and Mercy of God thus stepping in, in the very nick of Time for the Deliverance of his Son; in thankful Commemoration of it calls the Name of the Place *Jehovah-jireh*, that is, the Lord will see, or will provide *q. d.* a Sacrifice: for so he had answer'd his Son, *v. 8.* *As it is said to this Day, in the Mount of the Lord it shall be seen*, i. e. as it is proverbially said among the People of God to the Day wherein *Moses* wrote this History; in the Mount of extreme Danger and Distress, the Lord will be seen, or as some translate and paraphrase the Words, the Lord will see and find out unthought of ways of working out Deliverance for his People in their greatest Extremities. The Words thus explain'd afford us this Proposition.

That God often makes use of the Extremity of his People as the Opportunity of his appearing for their seasonable Relief and Assistance. I would here

- I. Shew that God oftentimes suffers his People's Case to become almost desperate before he appears for their Deliverance.
- II. Enquire into the Reasons why God does sometimes thus suffer his People to be reduced

duced into a Condition almost desperate before he appear for their Aid and Assistance. SERM. IV.

III. Enquire why God does relieve and deliver his People in their Extremity. And then improve the Point.

I. I would shew that God often times suffers his Peoples Case to become almost desperate, before he appears for their Deliverance. And here I need not take you further than your Bibles and your own Knowledge and Remembrance to make the thing plain to you.

Was not this the Case of the *Israelites* of old before God deliver'd them from the Egyptian Yoke? From Egypt, a wealthy and powerful People, who by their Oppressions of Gods People took the most effectual Method to prevent both their Resistance and Escape, wearing out their Strength and Courage by rigorous Bondage, and preventing their Increase in Number by destroying all the Male Children, which must to an Eye of Reason make their Escape seem a thing utterly impracticable; yet God did accomplish their Deliverance in a stupendious and miraculous Manner; and when afterwards they were by Pharaohs pursuit of 'em environ'd with the most distressing Circumstances, God opened a way for their Escape through the Sea, which at the same Time was the Grave of their Enemies, and for the space of forty Years together provided for the supply

SERM.

IV.

ply of the wants of that numerous Host in the midst of a barren Wilderness, till he brought them into the promised Land, when they often despairing of Supplies were ready to stone the Instrument of their Deliverance, to murmur against God, and wish for their former Servitude. How oft did he appear in the most wonderful and surprizing Manner? Raining Bread upon them from Heaven, bringing them Water out of the Rock, and causing the Quails to come and fall around their Camp.

And should we take a particular View of their Circumstances from one Age to another after their Settlement in *Canaan*, we may find that God often suffer'd them to fall into very great and sore Troubles, wherein they were without any probable views of Escape, but by Gods miraculous Appearance in favour of them, as we may observe by tracing the History of them through the Government of the Judges, *Jephtha*, *Gideon*, *Baruch*, *Sampson* and *Samuel*, and then by the Hand of *Saul* from the exorbitant Demands of the *Ammonites*.

Thus he often suffered *David* to fall into the greatest straits with his little Army through the raging Envy and Malice of *Saul*, from all which he rescued him by the most unexpected turns of Providence; one while by his lying unobserved in the same Camp wherein *Saul* had taken up his Quarters, and another while by bringing *Saul* News how the *Philistines* had invaded the Land, when he was surrounded on every

every Side, and there was no way open for SERM.
his Flight. IV.

Thus he delivered *Abijah* and his People from *Jeroboam* and his Army which compassed them both before and behind. Thus also he saved *Jehoshaphat*, when he was so distressed by the huge Host which came against him that he knew not what to do; thus also *Hezekiah* and *Jerusalem* from the blaspheming Threats of the King of *Assyria*, by sending forth an Angel that slew a hundred forty five thousand in one Night: and thus it has been in the Case of particular Persons mentioned in Scripture, whose Afflictions God has often permitted to be very sore and pressing before he has interposed for their Deliverance, of which the Context is a very eminent Instance; thus *Elijah* was fed by Ravens in the Desert, and the miraculous Increase of the Widows Cruse of Oyl and Barrel of Meal: Thus it was with the three Children in the fiery Furnace, and *Daniel* in the Lions Den.

Thus we have from Scripture several remarkable Instances of this Nature: I might have enumerated many others, were it needful; but I would now beg leave to put you in Mind of one or two which have fallen within your own and your almost immediate Predecessors Observation and Remembrance; and those respecting our own Nation, its Constitution, and Liberties both Civil and Religious; and which should ever affect the Heart of every true *Britain*, and every zealous Protestant with the
sincerest

p. 82
2 Leaves

SERM. sincerest Gratitude, and confirm his Faith in
 IV. Gods Providence with respect to all the Storms
 ——— that may at present be gathering, and threaten
 to discharge themselves upon us. The first, I
 would instance in, is the blasting our Enemies
 Hopes, and dispersing our boding Apprehensi-
 ons of Ruin and Destruction which arose from
 the *Spanish Armado*, christen'd invincible by the
 Pope: This, big and terrible as it was with
 hellish Designs, and Instruments of cruel Death
 and Slavery, at whose approach the whole
 Nation trembled, this, I say, was broke and
 shattered by the extraordinary Appearance of
 God for the Deliverance of our British *Israel*
 and the Confusion of its Enemies. And again,

In the succeeding Reign, when they had
 carried on the devilish Project of destroying
 both King and Parliament with one Blast to
 the very Point of Accomplishment, then, even
 in the Article of Danger, were their Counsels
 of Darkness discovered, and we again, with all
 the dear and valuable Interests which through
 the Mercy of God we hold to this Day, were
 retriev'd from the brink of Ruin.

But see the unwearied Industry of the Devil
 and his Emissaries; they are no sooner repulsed
 and baffled, but they renew the Assault; one
 Design has no sooner miscarried, but a new
 one is formed, if possible, more deep and se-
 cret: so that of late they have very much re-
 fined upon the manner of Plotting: They hate
 that clumsy mechanical way of Navys, Whips
 and

and butchering Knives, of Cellars, Match, and dark Lanthorn; therefore they have laid (which many of you *have*, I'm sure you *shou'd* have it still in your Minds) not a train of Gun-powder, but of Politicks, to blow up Parliaments and yet let the House stand with the Members in it: They had found out a New dispensing Power unknown to our Ancestors that wou'd at once make the *Magna Charta* no more than waste Paper. Another step they took to gull us of all Religion was a pious pretence of granting Liberty of Conscience, the Design of which Proclamation wou'd no doubt have been set in the clearest Light, had it been employ'd to kindle Fires both for Church-Men and Dissenters: then it was that the Tyrannical and Arbitrary Power of the Prince must be a *Law*; the Superstition of Popish Doctrine and Worship our only Religion; and Priests and Jesuits with Fire and Fagot, or a crew of Miscreants and *Irish* Cut-throats the Sanctions to enforce our Obedience thereto.

Did we not then seem to our selves as a Prey given to the Teeth of our Enemies? which way did we then hope for Relief? did we not apprehend our Case then to be very dreadful and piteous? with how thick and dark a Cloud were we then overcast? with what fervent Earnestness did we fly to our God who had so often broken the snare for our Escape when we had been so often surpriz'd in it? Did we not own that our Distress was so great that no Hand

G

but

SERM. but an Almighty One cou'd save us? He heard
 IV. our Moan, beheld our Griefs, and kindly concern'd Himself for our Deliverance, which He accomplish't for us by bringing about a happy Revolution: How this was done, I need not tell you, the happy Consequences of which we enjoy to this very Moment.

Thus *in the Mount the Lord was seen*: And Oh that we had behaved our selves so towards an indulgent Father, as that in the threatening Aspect we are under at present, we cou'd have any Ground of Hope that in the Mount the Lord wou'd yet be seen, by such another kind Interposition for us, and the Generations yet to come. But alas! where's that Humility, that happy Agreement among Christians, that Spirit of Prayer and stirring up one another to call on God that was then Observable in the People of these Lands, and which gave considering Persons great Encouragement to hope, that God yet had something extraordinary to do for his People: Which Spirit did it but once take Place and obtain among us, we might have some Expectations that God wou'd not utterly cast us off, though He *should think fit* for Wise and good Reasons to bring us into very distressing Circumstances. Which is the next Head I propos'd, namely,

II. To enquire into the Reasons why God may sometimes suffer his People's Afflictions to be extreme, and their Condition almost desperate

perate before he bring 'em in Aid and Assistance. And they may be such as these, SERM.
IV.

(I.) That so his People may have Opportunity to reflect upon their Carriage and Behaviour towards Him, which may have been the Occasion why he has suffer'd their Distress to come upon them.

A long Course of worldly Prosperity is generally observ'd to have had a very pernicious Influence upon the Church and People of God: And the Observation seems to be grounded upon a long Series of too sad, and too convincing Experiences. Nor does it seem at all strange that it shou'd be so; for they are but sanctified in part at present, (allied by the Body to the Brute, as well as to the Angel by the spiritual Principle which animates and moves the Body) and, consequently, very liable to be lull'd into an unguarded Security and Negligence by outward Peace and Happiness: Hence they oft fall insensibly into and continue long in Sin without Reflection on what they have done, or Remorse for it; God therefore in the wise Course of Providence sees fit sometimes to lay more gentle Restraints upon 'em, and sometimes with more remarkable and afflicting Strokes to rouse them from their Stupidity and Senselessness, and make them considerately review their Carriage and Deportment towards him, the several Instances of their Disobedience whereby he has been provoked thus to contend with 'em, each of

SERM. which have been so many steps towards their
 IV. present Afflictions: And here's the fittest Time
 for serious Reflection on their Sins and Follies,
 whilst their smart for them makes 'em thoughtful
 and considerate: This was the Case of the
Prodigal; He never thought of his undutiful-
 ness till He cou'd not appease the Clamours
 of an enraged Appetite with the Swines Husks:
 then, and not till then, did He think of own-
 ing that He had sinned against *Heaven and his*
Father.

And indeed such is the Nature of that Mo-
 nitor which God hath placed in every Man,
 that it's scarce possible for a Person (except
 He be given over to judicial Blindness) to fall
 under any extraordinary Affliction, and not
 reflect upon himself and his Carriage towards
 God, and carefully examine what it is that
 has been displeasing to Him: So that when
 God does bring us into Trouble He does then
 give us particular Opportunity for this. And
 thus it was with the Sons of *Jacob*, when they
 were sorely distressed by *Joseph's* rough Carriage,
 taking them for Spies and demanding one of
 'em to be left bound till their Return, as a
 Pledge of their Veracity; they then began to
 reflect how they had treated their Brother: *In*
that we saw the Anguish of his Soul when He be-
sought us, and we wou'd not hear, therefore is this
Distress come upon us. Gen. xlii. 21. And as
 God gives us by our Distress particular Op-
 portunities for this Reflection upon our Ways,

so He expects that we shou'd carefully endeavour to reform what we find amiss upon such Reflection. Does God threaten or afflict the Land of our Nativity? Is Prophaneness and Debauchery on the growing Hand? Do the Enemies of God and his People exalt themselves? Do they increase in Strength and Numbers? Do Storms of Persecution seem to gather over us and the Gospel seem ready to forsake us and remove to a People better disposed to improve such a Blessing? In one Word, Does the whole Face of Affairs raise the Expectations of our Enemies, but dash our Hopes? Then we may conclude that God gives us a fair Opportunity to reflect upon our Carriage towards Him, and to enquire into the Reason why God has a Controversy with us.

(2.) That they may be more fervent and earnest with God in Prayer for Deliverance. God has always a Delight and Complacence in the Prayers of his People; and the more fervent and earnest they are in their Applications, the more acceptable are they in his Sight: but the Smiles and Favours of the World too often make 'em cold and indifferent; they cast a damp upon, and chill those ardent and devout Affections which shou'd ever burn within their Breasts like the perpetual Fire upon the Altar. These render them dull and lifeless Formalities and displeasing to him who requires that we *pour out our Hearts before him*, Psal. lxii. 8. And when this is the Case, God often makes

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Use of the Rod to stir up and awaken them from their Lethargy, and put Life and Vigour into their Prayers. Thus it was with the *Israelites* they were soon *unmindful* of what God had *done for 'em*; but when He *slew 'em*, then they *sought Him*, they *returned and enquired early after God*, *Psal. lxxviii. 34.* God's People never pray with more Earnestness and Importance than when they are in Affliction: Thus we find *Jacob* when he was greatly distressed for Fear of his Brother *Esau*, when he had heard that he came to meet him and four hundred Men with him, *Gen. xxxii. 24, to the 29.* He wrestled with God till break of Day, and at last makes this humble Resolution, *I will not let thee go unless thou blest me*: And the happy Success of it we find there related. Thus did *Jehoshaphats* Apprehensions which he had from the huge Host that came against *Jerusalem*, work upon *Him* too, and upon his People, as we may find *2 Chron. xx. 12, 13.* How pathetically does he pray, *We have no might against this great Company that comes against us, neither know we what to do; but our Eyes are upon thee. And all Judah stood before the Lord with their little Ones, their Wives and their Children.* So *Hezekiah*, *2 Kings xix. 14,* when he had received the King of *Assyria's* Message of Blasphemy, by the Hand of *Rabshakeh*, *He went up into the House of the Lord, and spread it before the Lord and pray'd.* This is what God expects from his People in their Afflictions that they

they shou'd *stir up themselves to call upon Him*: SERM.
and his Command, *Jam. v. 3.* extends as well to IV.
publick as private Cases, *is any afflicted? let him* —

pray. And indeed this is nothing but what the Light of Nature it self has directed Heathens to do, as in the Case of the *Ninevites*, *Jonah* iii. When the Prophet warn'd them of their approaching Ruin they streight proclaim'd a *Fast*, and *put on Sackcloth*; and the King caus'd it to be proclaim'd unto the People, that they shou'd *cry mightily unto God, that so God might turn from his fierce Anger and not destroy 'em.* And indeed this seems to be the common Practice of all in their Troubles and Dangers to fly by Prayers to the Gods they worship'd for Salvation and Deliverance from them tho' they were helpless Stocks and Idols. God therefore plainly intends when he suffers his People to fall into Trouble, and Terrours to beset 'em round, that they shou'd then call upon him; and he promises, if they do so, he will deliver 'em, *Psal. l. 15.* the plain Purport of which Text is this, "Whensoever thou findest thy self in Danger Spiritual or Bodily make thy Application to me by fervent earnest Prayer, and know for certain, that I will not fail to aid and help thee, either in the things thou desirest, or by so ordering them as thou shalt have Reason to glorify and praise Me." Thus we see wherefore God does oft afflict his People, and shou'd hence be induced to comply with the Designs of his Providence when he frowns upon and

SERM. seems displeas'd with us: We shou'd seek to
 IV. appease his Anger, when he threatens us with
 — Judgments, or brings us into Danger, and hum-
 bly have Recourse to him by Prayer that he
 wou'd save us from the Calamities we deserve
 and fear may come upon us.

(3.) To abate our Hopes in outward Helps,
 and engage us to keep up a more lively Trust
 and Dependance upon him. The God, *in whom*
we live, and move, and have our Beings; from
 whom both we and all things else derive our
 all, does with the greatest Reason and Justice
 expect that we trust in him for all the Hap-
 piness we have or hope for, and depend upon
 him for Salvation from all the Evils we either
 feel or fear; but so vain and foolish are we that
 its no small Difficulty to bring our selves to
 a Compliance with it: While things run smooth
 and even, and there is nothing that we apprehend
 to disturb or annoy us, we flatter our
 selves with fond Conceits that our *Mountain*
stands strong, and we shall never be moved; and
 are very unwilling to own (I mean practical-
 ly) the Creatures Insufficiency to make us hap-
 py. This too much prevails even among the
 People of God themselves in this imperfect
 State, wherein the Remains of the carnal Mind
 are not quite done away, and they are too
 much pleas'd with, and depend too much upon
 the things that are present and sensible: God
 therefore often removes 'em, or suffers them to
 fail us, that so we may see the Vanity of trust-
 ing

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3 Leaves

ing in 'em, and may be deter'd from building too great Hopes upon such weak and rotten Foundations, by the frequent Disappointment of 'em. Nay sometimes we seem so unwilling to part with this vain and foolish Confidence in the Creature, that we even force God to reduce us to such Extremities that we can't with all our fondness imagine that outward Helps can be of any Service to Us. And then our Distress teaches us from whom to expect Deliverance, on whom to rely for Salvation; and he himself has declared his pleasedness therewith, Psal. xxxvii. 40. *The Lord helpeth the righteous and delivereth them; He will deliver 'em from the wicked because they trust in him.* And the Psalmist tells us elsewhere that at what Time he is afraid he will trust in God, Psa. lvi. 3. There is the best and most rational Ground for this; because he is a *Help and a shield to them that fear him*, He therefore commands such to *trust in Him*, Psal. xv. 11. And that they do it at all Times, Psal. lxii. 8.

When therefore our Troubles run high, and we have no Prospects but what are melancholy and discouraging, let us not anxiously cast about for Relief from the Creature, but *cast all our Care upon God*, and put our selves with an entire Trust into his Hands as one who cares for us, and will not suffer any of his Dependants to perish for want of Care or Power to relieve 'em.

(4.) That

SERM.

IV.

(4.) That their Deliverance may not be (as it generally too much is) ascribed to second Causes.

— When Dangers have not been very threatening, or Troubles very great and heavy, the Escape from 'em has been often unobserv'd or soon forgotten, or at least God has had but a very small and heartless Tribute of Acknowledgment. The immediate Instruments of Deliverance are applauded; it is their Address and Wisdom that procured the Success, and these therefore must have their grateful Returns, while God's Indulgence and Protection is quite neglected. Sometimes therefore God Suffers the Enemies of his Church to prevail and carry their Success so far, that their Condition seems in an Eye of Sense to be quite Desperate and Helpless; and defers his Appearance for them till they are sunk out of Sight of Hope; and then just at a Time when his Enemies Hopes are biggest, and his People ready to lie down in Despair, he breaks in upon 'em with unexpected Deliverance, and surprizes them into a thankful Acknowledgment that it is He who hath saved 'em; at the same time confounding their Enemies, and forcing them to acknowledge that *it is the Finger of God*. Thus while the one with Transports of Joy praise God the Author of their Deliverance, and the other with Shame confess that their Defeat was effected by the same Hand; they both agree to ascribe it to its own Author.

Exactly

Exactly parallel to what is here advanced was the Case of the *Israelites* at their Deliverance from the Egyptian Yoke: After *Pharaoh* had thrust them out, and they had encamp'd themselves by the red Sea, which lay before 'em, (Ex. xiv 2, &c.) *Pharaohs* Heart was harden'd and he pursues them with all his Chariots and Horsemen: On either side of them were Garrisons of the Egyptians: At *Pharaohs* approach (which they now observ'd) they were no Doubt in the most distracting Fright: They saw themselves in the most perplex'd and embarrass'd Condition possible, without the least room for Hope: What shou'd they now do? certain and inevitable Death was swiftly approaching, nor cou'd they think of escaping: They were pen't in with Walls on both Sides: before 'em was certain Ruin from the Sea, and behind 'em from the Rage and Cruelty of the Egyptians: in this Despairing state they cry'd to God, at the same Time wishing for very Anguish that they had died in their Slavery rather than be thus Massacred: In this very juncture, God, that he might have all the Glory of this great Salvation orders them to March on, and go forward, what into the Sea! is not this as certain a Death as any of the rest? May we not as well give the Egyptians one desperate Assault? That can be no more, nay it may possibly be less, dangerous to us: Its no more certain that their Swords will wound and kill us, than that the Sea will overwhelm and bury

SERM.

bury us. No, God has *here* a way of EscapeIV. for 'em: *Moses* must, by lifting up the Rod,

— make the Waves retire this way and that, and open a Passage of safety for 'em, which will close again, after they were past over, upon their Enemies to their Destruction. This remarkably kind Interposition of the Divine Providence on the Behalf of this People extorted from the Egyptians this Confession, (*v. 25.*) *the Lord fighteth for them*; and raised the Spirits of *Moses* and the People into an Extasy of Joy and Praise; as you may see, *ch. xv. to the 20. v.* I might here instance in Mercies to this Nation, whereby we have been over-taken in the most unthought of, and unhop'd for Manner, so that we cou'd not forbear crying out with Astonishment, *This is the Lord's doing, and Marvellous in our Eyes.*

Whatever Instruments therefore God may make Use of, we shou'd carefully Notice, and thankfully record the Deliverances he has wrought for us, and give *Him* all the Glory, least we provoke Him by our Ingratitude to afflict us in such a Manner, that none but an Almighty Arm can be sufficient to retrieve and deliver us.

(5.) That they may have a more quick and lively relish of Mercy, when 'tis afforded. Mercies will be the more welcome, by how much the longer they have been waited for, or the loss of them has been fear'd. When we have lived in long Expectation of Deliverance from
Affliction,

Affliction, and at last are tired out with waiting, and ready to give up all Hopes, then to be of the sudden overtaken with Mercies, is what must needs be exquisitely pleasing and delightful; for this not only gives us the actual Possession and Enjoyment of the Blessing we long'd and waited for, but also removes that tormenting and tedious Expectation which keeps the Soul in a continued uneasy suspense between Hope and Fear. This is an Addition to the Satisfaction, and gives us a lively Relish of the Mercy, as they have of a healthful State, who have been long pineing away in Pain and Sicknefs.

Or has the Loss of Mercies been long fear'd? This must more sensibly affect the Soul than the bare undisturb'd Possession of them; for then we are better disposed to consider their Worth, and Value our Happiness prolong'd by their Continuance, and to flatter ourselves that they are better secured to us, and that we have faster hold of 'em; as Trees are said to take faster Root after they have been violently tost by Storms and Tempests. Thus it was with old *Jacob* when he had for many Years given up his darling *Joseph* for lost and gone, and was surprized with the News of his being alive and Lord of *Egypt*; it even over powered the weak Remains of Life; but when he was a little revived and come to himself, how unable is he to give Vent to the big Satisfaction of his Soul, *Gen. xlv. 28. It is enough; Joseph*

SERM. *Jeph my Son is yet alive, says He, I will go and*

IV. *see Him before I die:* Not unlike this we may suppose *Abrahams* Case to be, here in the Text; a thousand tender Thoughts, no doubt, pierced his Heart. (Obedient as he was), when he came to the finishing part of his Duty, he cou'd not but be under some Concern for the *Son whom he loved*, (as God called him, *v. 2.*) and therefore when the Order came, *lay not thine Hand upon the Lad*, with what Transports of Joy, may we suppose, He took the Lamb to his Bosom; nor did he ever embrace him with so much Satisfaction, as now he had receiv'd him (in a manner) from the Dead: never did he hear such joyful words as these were, which pluckt the Knife from his Throat, and restored him again to his Father.

But I forget my self, I need not go so far for an Instance of this kind: have not the People of God in this Land been affected with the most lively and pleasing sense of Mercies, which have been established to 'em after long Fears of their Removal by Enemies? Are there not some who hear me this Day, that can remember how their Hearts have trembled for the Ark of God? Do not such too remember, that, after they had been long oppress'd and harass'd with Informers, Fines, and Imprisonments, they saw the Bulwark of the reform'd Religion, the Heart and Vitals of the Protestant Interest upon the very brink of Ruin: And did you not in that very Juncture with Transport and Extasy behold Heaven's indulgent Care to protect

test and save you? (if you did not *then*, and do not *still* retain a lively Sense of it, I shou'd be apt to think it wou'd admit a Question, which was the greater Miracle, God's Goodness, or your Senselessness and Ingratitude.) Don't you remember how your Hearts and Mouths were fill'd with the Praises of God? O call this to Mind, and often mention it to his Praise, with the most grateful Affection, that so your own Spirits may be kept warm and lively, and the Remembrance of it may be handed down to the Generations yet to come, that they, considering what God has done for their Forefathers, may ever retain a becoming Sense of his Goodness. I proceed in the third Place

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[*This Sermon may be divided here.*]

III. To enquire into the Reasons why God relieves his People in their Extremity.

(I.) Because they are then fittest for Mercy and Deliverance. God has always kind and gracious Designs in all his Dispensations to his People; tho' they are so purblind as not to apprehend, or so negligent as not to observe them; for he does not willingly Grieve, nor Afflict the Children of Men, *Lam. iii. 33.* He is a tender and compassionate Father, and tho' the Pride and Peevishness, or the Luxury and Wantonness of his Children oft make it necessary that he shou'd take up the Rod; yet when
the

SERM. the Ends of Affliction are answer'd, when their
 IV. Pride is reduced, and they are brought into a
 ——— humble, loving and tractable Temper; then
 they are removed: If God at any time
 chastizeth with severity, it is through their
 stubborn and froward Spirits, which makes
 it necessary, that so the End of Correction may
 be answered upon them; for God will not lay
 on one needless stroke, though he don't immedi-
 ately throw by the Rod upon their crying out
 and complaining of their Smart: And in this
 He acts the Part of a Discreet and Prudent,
 as well as Kind and Tender Parent. God loves
 to see his Children humble and submissive un-
 der his Hand, kind and loving to each other,
 penitent for their Sins, earnest in their Ap-
 plications to him, weaned from the Creature,
 depending upon Him, sensible of the Worth
 of Mercies, and disposed carefully to improve
 'em; and when their Sufferings have brought
 'em to such a Frame, then they have their Ends
 upon them, and then there is great Reason to
 hope that God will arise and save 'em.

Thus he dealt with his People of Old; after
 he had taken several Methods to reclaim 'em
 from that sottish Sin of Idolatry to which they
 were so addicted, and these proved ineffectual
 thro' their obstinate and perverse Tempers;
 He denounced by his Prophets utter Destruction
 to their City and Temple, which they pull'd
 down upon 'em by their Obstinacy and Im-
 penitence: They were carried away and kept

in Captivity seventy Years, which did tho- SERM.
roughly break and tame 'em, as you may see IV.
in *Ezra ix. 10. Neh. ix. Dan. ix.* And its very
observable that the Jews to this very Day re-
tain the most implacable hatred to that Sin of
Idolatry for which their Fathers smarted so se-
verely.

(2.) That so his Peoples Enemies may not triumph, nor carry it too proudly. Shou'd God never make any remarkable Appearance for his People, but suffer his Enemies always to prosper in their cruel and malicious Contrivances and Practices against them, they wou'd then be tempted, either to think there was no God that concern'd himself with human Affairs, or that He was not a Lover of Holiness; but of Sin and Sinners. But yet He does permit them sometimes to go so far that they are almost ready to draw such Inferences as these; which the Holy *Psalmist* took notice of, when He complain'd that his *Enemies Reproaches were as a Sword in his Bones*, while they said *where is thy God?* And in *Psal. lxxix. 9. 10.* reciting the Miseries of the Church of God, He makes this an Argument why God shou'd deliver 'em, as a thing in which the Glory of his Name was concern'd; *wherefore shou'd th' Heathen say, where is their God?* The very same Argument we find *Moses* making Use of, *Exod. xxxii. 11, 12, 13.* on the behalf of *Israel*, whom God had before threatned for their Rebellion: *Why, says He, Does thy Wrath wax hot against thy People,*
H which

SERM. *which thou hast brought forth out of Egypt with*

IV. *great Power, and a mighty Arm? Wherefore*

— *shou'd the Egyptians speak and say, for Mischief did He bring them out to slay 'em in the Mountains, and to consume 'em from the Face of the Earth? Turn from thy fierce Wrath and repent of this Evil against thy People: What was the Success of this Argument you read in the, 14 ver. And again, (Numb. xiv 13.) after God had complain'd of their Disobedience and Unbelief, and had threatned to smite 'em with the Pestilence, Moses makes Use of the very same Argument and with no worse Success than before (v 20.) And God himself (Deut. xxxii. 26, 27.) declares this to be a thing which He is concern'd to prevent. Were it not, says He, that I feared the Wrath of the Enemy, lest their Adversaries shou'd behave themselves strangely, and lest they shou'd say our Hand is high, and the Lord hath not done all this, I wou'd scatter 'em into Corners, I wou'd make the Remembrance of 'em to cease from amongst Men. This therefore may be another Reason why God makes the Extremity of his People his Opportunity to appear for their Aid and Assistance.*

(3.) For the clearer Manifestation of his Power, Wisdom, and Goodness. As God hath display'd his adorable Perfections in the Creation; so He does it no less in his Providence and Government of the World: His infinite Power, Wisdom, and Goodness are equally conspicuous and remarkable in the one and the other;

other; and he expects that this shou'd be noticed and carefully observ'd by those whom he has endued with reasonable intellectual Powers, and made capable of observing his Agency upon things about 'em. But the Commonness and Frequency of these Providences makes 'em very little regarded by most, and therefore God does sometimes most remarkably exert his Almighty Arm under the Conduct of infinite Wisdom and Goodness in the behalf of his Suffering and distressed Interest, that all the World shall see and own his Hand, and confess that he has not stood by as unconcern'd and negligent; and its plain to every observing Person, that the divine Interposition is never so visible and apparent, and consequently his Perfections never likely to be more clearly manifest, or with greater Advantage, than when He hath suffer'd his People to be reduced to a very low and hopeless Condition, and their Enemies to be big with Pride, and Confidence of Success, to bring Salvation and Deliverance to the one, but Confusion and Disappointment to the other by Methods alike unforeseen and unexpected both to *his* People and their Enemies.

And this *Solomon* more than intimates to be the Effect of Gods Appearance for his People, when He prays that *God* wou'd maintain the Cause of his People *Israel* at all times, as the matter shou'd require, and backs his Petition with this Argument, that all the People of the Earth

SERM. *may know that the Lord is God, and that there*

IV. *is none else, 1 Kings viii. 59, 60. And this we*
 — find himself asserting to be one End of his Delivering his People and overthrowing their Enemies, *Exod. xiv. 4. I will be honour'd upon Pharaoh and upon all his Host; that the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord.* And this He repeats in the 17, 18. *ver.* And the same Influence we find this great and wonderful Deliverance had upon the *Israelites* themselves, *ver. 30, 31.*

(4.) Shou'd God fail his People now it wou'd discourage them from trusting Him for the Time to come. The Number of God's People is very small, their Enemies many, inveterate and outrageous: Hence it comes to pass that they have many and sore Troubles, from which they can seldom have any Prospect of Deliverance from humane Aid: There is none to whom they can have Recourse with Hopes of Success, but their God in whom they trust, and shou'd He fail 'em in time of Distress, they must lye down in Sorrow and Despair; their Condition wou'd then be the most uncomfortable and discouraging: But this wou'd not stop here neither; it wou'd have but an unpleasant Aspect upon the People of God in succeeding Generations, and discourage them from seeking Him in their Affliction with holy Trust and Confidence: And tho' He has commanded us to *trust in him at all times, (Psal lxii. 8.) to pour out our Hearts before him, and promised*
 that

that if we call upon Him in the Day of Trouble, He will deliver us, &c. (Psal. l. 15); yet shou'd He suffer 'em to sink under their Troubles as helpless and forlorn, they wou'd have little Reason to encourage themselves to seek or hope for Relief from the Hand, that had so often fail'd and disappointed those who did depend upon it. God does therefore deliver and save his People in their Distress that they may be encouraged to trust in Him; and we find He does not suffer his Judgments entirely to ruin, though they may very much Distress a sinful People, unless more mild and gentle Methods have been before made Use of, and render'd ineffectual through their Obstinacy and Impenitence.

Now, by Way of Improvement :

We have seen that it's no uncommon thing for God's People to be in Distress and Danger, that an afflicted is frequently their Condition, and that God, who is the supreme Disposer of all Events, has wise and good Purposes to be brought about by such Dispensations for his own Glory, and the good of his People; that He never utterly forsakes 'em, or leaves 'em to sink under their Afflictions without support; nay, that He does oft appear in the Mount of extreme Difficulty and Danger, and make their Extremity his Opportunity of bringing 'em seasonable Assistance, and Relief: I say, since this is so, we may hence conclude

SERM.

IV.

(1.) That neither the Length, nor Greatness of any Affliction shou'd drive us from our Hope and Trust in God into Despair and Distrust of Him. He is still the same infinitely Powerful, Wise and good Being; the Possession of which glorious Perfections without Variableness or Shadow of Change, is, at this Day, no less powerful a Motive than it was to his Servants formerly, for us to commit our selves and all our Concerns into his Hands with the most entire Trust and Confidence in the greatest Calamities that can befall us; and as He still is no less merciful, kind and good than He always was, so He retains the same gracious Purposes in afflicting his People; and when these are accomplished and brought about, we shou'd not doubt his Assistance and Relief of us any more than of his other Servants on whom he has laid his afflicting Hand. Be our Dangers never so imminent and threatening, our Afflictions never so heavy, long, and numerous, we shou'd Support and bear up our Spirits by thus encouraging our selves in God, that, as our Distress, whether felt or fear'd, (though so great that we can't see which way Deliverance can be had) is not such but that God's Power can rescue and save us, or our Condition so perplexed, but that his Wisdom can extricate and disentangle us; so his Goodness does encline and prompt Him to exert these on the behalf of his Faithful Ones, who trust in Him; for He is a Buckler to all those that do so, *Psal. xviii. 30.*

And

And as on the one Hand Trust in God is a good Preparative for Deliverance, as it is pleasing to Him, and disposes us to profit under his Hand, and rightly to improve restored Mercies; so on the other Hand our Diffidence and Distrust of his Care and Goodness is displeasing to Him and justly provokes Him longer to defer our Deliverance, and to add to our Afflictions, and withdraw his Supports under 'em, if not at last utterly to refuse to appear for our Aid and Assistance. As He is blessed that makes the Lord his Trust, *Psal. xl. 4.* So we may justly conclude that God is displeased with the Neglect of this, or a Distrust of Him, as we find He is, *Zeph. iii. 2.* where God pronounces a Woe upon the Inhabitants of *Jerusalem* because they did not trust in Him: and while we run counter to God's Will and Commands in our Afflictions, we have no Reason to expect his Appearance for us; but the contrary: But when God has suffer'd Troubles to come upon us, and these to rise so high that our Case may seem almost Desperate; then we are to Act a lively Faith in his Promises, (such as *Rom. viii. 28.* That all Things *shall work together for good to them who love God*, from whence we may derive the best support) and obey his Commands (such as *Psal. lxii. 8.* that we trust in the Lord at all Times) which we may here see is the best Ground to Hope that in the Mount of Difficulty the Lord will appear.

SERM. (2.) The want of Means on our Part is no

IV. ~~Hinderance~~ to God's working for us. We may be reduced to such Extremities as to have no rational Grounds to Hope for Deliverance from any Means within the compass of our own Knowledge or Power, because our own Powers are but Small, and our Knowledge of other Agents is but very Scanty, and our Power of using the Agents whose Power we are acquainted with is still confined to a narrower Compass; but this can be no Hinderance to God's working for us, who is perfectly acquainted with the Capacities and Inclinations of the Creature, and can by his Power and Wisdom over-rule and order all its Actions so as to make 'em Subservient to his own Designs, while the Instrument he makes use of, is sometimes entirely ignorant of what it's doing, or sometimes is acting with very different Views and driving on Designs of a contrary Nature; so that often Times those very Measures which his Enemies have concerted for the Ruin of his People, and which seem'd to carry along with 'em their inevitable Destruction, have been made the Means of their Salvation and Deliverance.

Thus God hath saved us oftener than Once, when we have not only been Destitute of all Means of Escape, but when every thing has seem'd to conspire our Ruin, and it was thought impossible to prevent it: In an unexpected Time and manner He has taken the Wise in their own Craftiness, has turn'd their own Artillery

tillery upon themselves, and thereby defeated their Hopes and Counsels; and blown over the Storm that gave his People such terrible Apprehensions. Are there not some amongst us who have seen (and others who have heard from those who saw it) a Popish Prince upon the Throne with a Jesuitical Council contriving our Ruin and a standing Army of Miscreants and Cut throats to support his Arbitrary and Lawless Encroachments on our Religion and Liberties? Were not all Means wanting on our Parts to procure Deliverance? Did they not endeavour to weaken us further, by dividing us, and playing one Part of the Protestants upon the other? As they had formerly put the Church of *England* upon persecuting with Fines and Imprisonments those that dissented from them; so now they hoped by proclaiming Liberty of Conscience to the Dissenters, to draw them in to join with the Papists against the Church of *England*; which doubtless would have been to our utter overthrow had not our Eyes been open'd of God to see our common Danger, and Sacrifice private Injuries and Resentments to the publick Good and Safety; so that when this Mine was Sprung, the Execution it did was all to their own Prejudice and terminated in their utter Overthrow: And thus though there was no Means on our Part, this was no Hinderance to God's Working for us to baffle the Force and Policy of our Enemies, nor is it still any Hindrance to Him. And therefore,

(3.) We

SERM.

IV.

(3.) We may see how necessary a Grace Faith is for the Christian Conduct. Gods People are at present in a State of Probation and Trial, a State of Distance, in a waste and howling Wilderness; and whilst they are journeying Homewards they must not expect to be free from Troubles from their many Enemies, which will be ever assauling and annoying them on their Way, and sometimes bring 'em thereby into great and heavy Calamities: These are the Methods of the Father of Mercies whereby He wou'd engage us to our Duty to Him, and our Happiness in Him: While therefore we are in the School of Affliction (which is not strange or uncommon for Gods People here) a firm Trust and Confidence in Him is necessary to our suitable Deportment and Carriage: A steady Perswasion of his Goodness and Mercy towards us even in afflicting us, is requisite to our Submissive Resignation and Acquiescence in his Dispensations, and to our Dependance upon his Promise, that these *short Afflictions which are but for a Moment shall work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory*, 2 Cor. xiv. 17. This Faith is necessary to suppress and stifle our natural Inclination to grumble, murmur and be uneasy when Afflictions are long and heavy; and which we have much ado to keep down when we have none or but small Prospect of Relief. Since then good People are oft in Streights and Difficulties here, and these sore and heavy, it's very plain that
nothing

nothing but a lively Faith can support and **SERM.**
 bear up their Spirits, nothing but this Divine **IV.**
 Grace can enable 'em to act and live as be-
 comes their Character.

(4.) Hence see the happy Condition of Gods
 People, who have a Remedy for every Disease,
 a Support in every Affliction, and a healing
 Plaister broad enough for every Wound, be they
 never so big or many. God may and does of-
 ten suffer his People to fall into Troubles, and
 these may be very heavy; He may suffer
 Dangers to surround 'em, and these may be
 great and pressing; and He may in great Good-
 ness and Mercy to 'em suffer their Case to be
 almost Desperate before He appear to their Aid:
 but this is with kinder Designs than any earth-
 ly Parents correct their Children: They oft
 do it out of Passion or Humour, but God only
 for *their Profit that they may be Partakers of his*
Holiness: So that Afflictions though for the pre-
 sent they are not joyous but grievous; neverthe-
 less afterwards they yield the peaceable Fruits of
 Righteousness to them that are exercised there-
 with, Heb. xii. 10. They can rejoice in them as
 the signs of Son-ship: They can say that in
 very Faithfulness God has afflicted them, Ps. cxix.
 75. that they are happy whom God corrects; for
 if they submissively accept 'em he'll turn 'em
 to good: These are to wean 'em from the
 World from whence they meet with nothing
 but Vexation and Disappointment, to bring
 'em nearer to God their proper Blessedness and
 make

SERM. make 'em more Holy: And they shall be re-
 IV. moved as soon as fitting, that is, when God
 has had the Glory, and they the Advantage by
 'em that He intended.

Now what more refreshing to an afflicted Child of God than this? What can support a Christian equally with this in the most melancholy Prospect He can have, than to consider that there are good Designs in all that he feels, and that when Afflictions, are answer'd they shall be removed? Let us then who call our selves Gods People *hear the Voice of the Rod, and who hath appointed it.* Let us, whom He hath brought into great Affliction, enquire wherefore is this *Distress come upon us?* And appease our justly offended Sovereign by our Return to Him from whom we have backsliden, that so in the Mount of our Difficulty and Distress the *Lord may be seen for Us.*





SERMON V.

ELIHU'S Advice under AFFLICTION.

JOB XXXIV. 31, 32.

*Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have born
Chastisement, I will not offend any more. That
which I see not teach thou me; if I have done
Iniquity, I will do no more.*

THE great Design of Religion is to S
form our Spirits, and Lives aright;
and one of its Excellencies is to teach us how —
to behave well under Affliction: the active
Parts of Religion are much less difficult then the
Suffering, especially when Trials are sharp and
long: We all of us need to have our Minds
well instructed and fortified for such a Season;
that so the Advice which is here given by *Elibu*
to *Job* when the Hand of God was upon Him
may be follow'd by Us, as that which directs
to the most proper and decent Behaviour, when
Afflictions befall us.

In

In the Words we have,

I. Advice given to *Job* what he should do under the afflicting Hand of God. *I have born Chastisement, I will not offend any more, That which I see not teach thou me, &c.*

II. The Propriety of this Advice asserted. *Surely it is meet to be said unto God.*

I. Here is Advice given to *Job*; which consists of the following Branches.

[1.] Submission, *I have born Chastisement.*

[2.] Prayer, *What I see not teach thou me, and*

[3.] Resolution, *I will not offend any more; if I have done Iniquity I will do no more.*

[1.] *Elihu* advises *Job* to Submission, *I have born Chastisement*: This is not meant barely of undergoing Pain, or Sickness, Disappointment, Shame, or Loss: Many feel these and groan under 'em; but they don't bear 'em: bearing Afflictions signifies a bearing them well. It implies

(1.) That we see and own the Hand of God in our Sorrows. We must fix our Thoughts carefully upon God as the great Orderer, and Disposer of the Afflictions we meet with. He makes the Air infectious, the Seasons unhealthful, and the Earth barren. He stops our Breath, or the Breath of our Friends, and cuts off all our Hopes. Art thou sick or pained? Are thy Friends dead or dying? the Hand of God is in it, and there thine Eye shou'd be fix'd.

This

This shou'd be a settled Point with us that God is the Author of all the Afflictions that befall us; and indeed without a just Sense, and Acknowledgment of this we shall not pay God the Honour due to his Providence and Government of the World. SERM. V.

(2.) It implies that we confess the Justice, Wisdom, and Goodness of God, in ordering our Afflictions. While we consider God as the Author of what we suffer; we must remember that He never punishes but for a Fault, nor more than the offence deserves. It is not merely because He will do it, nor to shew his Power; but to vindicate his Honour and Government, or to prepare the Sufferer for some good Thing which He wou'd not otherwise be fit for. *Justice and Judgment are the Habitation of his Throne, even when Clouds and Darknes are round about Him:* And when the heaviest Strokes are given to his Creatures, they shou'd then own his Goodness to 'em, in that He does not quite destroy 'em.

(3.) Our *bearing Chastisement* implies that we acquiesce in, and submit to it. Our Minds must rest in what God does, so as to be satisfied and easy with it. We must not quarrel with him, nor complain of him; but throw aside every Objection that arises in our Minds against Him, and neither say nor think that He can do any thing Wrong: We must take all well that He is pleas'd to lay upon Us, and say it is *the Lord*, let him do what seemeth him Good.

(4.) It

SERM.

V.

(4.) It imports our Compliance with the Design of his Chastisements. We are therefore to enquire into the Meaning of Gods Rod, and shou'd be willing to forbear whatsoever He shews his Dislike of, or to do whatsoever He calls us to perform, We cannot be said to bear Chastisement unless we yield up our selves to an entire Compliance with the Intentions of it.

Now the Design of Affliction is, either to recover us from some evil, or bring us to a deeper Sense of it; to work some great good in us, or lead us to some Duty; and when we are willing to be put into the way God wou'd have us, or out of the way which He dislikes; then we may be said to bear Chastisement aright: When we are ready to say from our Hearts "*Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? I am sorry wherein I have offended, and wou'd now be reclaim'd: whatsoever thou wou'dst have me be, that I wou'd be.*"

[2.] The second Head of Advice is Prayer, *What I see not teach thou me.* This is exactly agreeable to what we find elsewhere: *Is any afflicted? Let him pray,* Jam. v. 13. Afflictions are apt Means to bring us to our Knees, and stir us up to pour out our Souls before God. Here it may be proper to enquire what is imply'd in this Teaching; and what Reason there is to desire it.

What is imply'd in this Teaching, *What I see not, teach thou me.*

(1.) Teach

(1.) Teach me to observe those Sins which SERM.
V.
have escaped my Observation, *to say unto God,*

“ In many Things I have offended: My Feet
“ daily Slide, while I wou’d walk in the Way
“ of thy Commandments; and there are many
“ Sins committed against God and Man, against
“ my self and others which I cannot Charge
“ my self with: I never perceiv’d ’em thro’
“ Heedlessness and Incogitancy: Teach me
“ to observe this and the other, and many such
“ Things as I am apt to overlook and pass by.”

Now, these are the *secret Faults* which Interpreters have understood that the Psalmist desires to be *cleansed from*, Psal. xix. 12.

(2.) Bring that to my Memory which I have forgot, though I did once observe it. Help me to look back upon what I have been thinking, doing and saying: Sin has been committed in all this; and great has been the Number of my Offences: Many shall I be charg’d with at thy bar which have quite slipt my Memory: Oh help me now to recall ’em, that I may be suitably humbled for them.

(3.) Convince me of the Sinfulness of that which I never saw to be amiss, and make me to discern more of the Malignity of that which I knew was wrong. Some things have been allow’d, some Liberties have been taken, which I durst not have attempted, had the Sinfulness of ’em been well understood: And as I am liable to make Mistakes, to misconstrue thy Law, or not to compare my own Heart and Actions
I with

SERM. with this Law as I shou'd; do thou convince
 V. me wherein I have sinned, that I may turn
 from it for the future: see if there be *any evil way in me, and lead me in the way Everlasting.*

And as it's possible a great many sinful Things may be done, which were never seen to be amiss; so there is a Malignity in those Things which we know to be Sinful, which we never perceiv'd: And accordingly the Advice may be to this Sense, "O that I may be made more to apprehend the Evil of all Sin: Give me to see Sin as exceeding Sinful: Let the Scales fall off from mine Eyes, which have hitherto made 'em dim: Make me now to know more of the Deformity and Loathsomeness of Sin: Set it before mine Eyes in all it's Aggravations, as contrary to the very Nature of the blessed God, opposite to his Government, an Enemy to all his Perfections, and Ruinous both to Soul and Body."

(4.) Awaken my Conscience to do it's Office that I may be affected with what I see: Let not my Sense of Sin be a drowsy, lifeless Apprehension of the Thing; but a quick and piercing Sense of it, such as shall prick me to the Heart, and make me Groan, and be in Bitterness because of it, as inconsistent with, and prejudicial to my best Interests, and endangering all my future Happiness: Let that Monitor within me be roused to charge the Fact and Fault home upon me; and to convince me of the Folly and Unreasonableness of Sin, that I may be affected with it as I ought to be. But

But in the second Place, Why does *Elihu* direct *Job* thus to Pray? *What I see not teach thou me.* Or what Reason is there to desire this Teaching? SERM. V.

(1.) Because of our Ignorance and Dullness. The Law of God is exceeding broad; it reaches to the whole Man, and all that passies within Him and without Him; towards his God and towards his Neighbour: Our Faculties are weak; there is a great Deal we are much in the Dark about; and of our selves we are *slow of Heart to understand* the Law of God in its full Extent and Meaning; there is a great deal of our Duty we don't find at all, and a great Deal we don't find out at first View, but by slow Degrees: We had therefore great need to pray, *what I see not teach thou me.* A great many Cases occur which are difficult: Sometimes Duty is neglected because not apprehended, and Sin committed because we don't see that it is sinful: the Understanding is often imposed upon by false Colours with which it is cover'd and disguised: Hereupon it becomes very necessary for Creatures so dull and ignorant as we are, to pray *What I see not teach thou me.*

(2.) Because of our forgetfulness. There is a great variety of Objects which pass before us in a continual thick Succession, and impress us variously; (and those are not always of the greatest Importance to us that make the most Impression upon us;) so that many a Thought,

SERM. Word or Action (whether good or bad) which

V. shou'd be thought over again, is lost and forgot; which renders it highly proper and expedient that we shou'd sometimes pray, especially when under Affliction, *Lord, what I see not teach thou me.*

(3.) Because of our Partiality. We are apt to judge too favourably in our own Cause, and unwilling to think of the Sin we love, that which carrieth in it Pleasure, Reputation or Gain: There are some Things we are too ready to comply with, and hereupon too ready to plead for and excuse: Conscience is oftentimes bribed into Silence because such and such Things have a kind Aspect upon our secular Interests: And on the other Hand self-denying Duties will always be attended with a great many shuffling Excuses, whereby to bring of our Flesh from an Obligation to Difficulties: A slight Appearance of an Argument seems enough to shelter our selves under from the Rebukes of Conscience, from whence arise very corrupt Judgments: and indeed we stand so near our selves that our own Spots are not easily discern'd: we have something or other to say, which a bias'd Mind shall admit, and so preclude the Advice and Direction of the Text.

[3.] The third Head of Advice is, Resolution; *I will not offend any more; if I have done Iniquity, I will do no more.* God is offended with all Iniquity; and that is Iniquity which offends Him.

The

The Particle, *if*, here is not to be understood as expressive of any Doubt, but to be interpreted by, *seeing*. Since I have done Iniquity, I will do no more. And so this Advice implies the following Things, SERM. V.

(1.) I purpose by thy Grace not to do again what thou shewest me is sinful: I not only have done with all Designs of Sinning, dropt all Intentions of repeating the hateful Thing; but on the contrary, I intend to employ myself in thy Service, and for thy Honour: I see what poor Pleasures and real Sorrows Sin is attended with, and I see God is thereby offended: I see my Ways crooked and perverse, and will return to 'em no more: this is a thing that I am settled and fixed in, and this Determination, through Grace shall never be alter'd.

(2.) This also implies his Promise, that through Divine Assistance He wou'd not do it. "I here oblige my self to thy Majesty by a solemn Vow, and put it out of my own Power ever to revoke the good thing I design: Grant me but the Assistance of thy Grace, to fulfill the Promise I now make: I lay these Bonds upon my self, that I may not start when press'd hard with Temptations from the Enemy: I will not be at Liberty; indeed, I am not at Liberty whether I will do this or refuse it; but I promise, that so I may tie a fickle Heart faster: This I design as a Curb to hold it closer: I here make that which is matter of Duty, the matter also of my Promise,

SERM. "mise, hoping that what I am not of my
 V. "self sufficient for, thou wilt graciously enable me to perform: I go forth to the Work
 "not in my own Strength but in thine." This implies also,

(3) That He wou'd Use all Means to prevent his doing it again. q d. "I cannot expect
 "unactive Resolves will carry me through a
 "Work of so great Extent and Difficulty:
 "and I shall find it hard to go through it by
 "my own unassisted Strength, to keep my
 "Conscience tender, my Resolutions steady,
 "and my Affections warm: I'll therefore humbly implore divine Assistance, and follow the
 "Instructions and Warnings of thy Word,
 "that I may be directed what to do, and what
 "to avoid: O, that this Word may dwell in
 "me richly, and be as a *Lamp unto my Feet,*
 "and a *Light unto my Path.*"

II. In the other Part of the Words, we have the Propriety of this Method asserted. *Elibu* recommends it as a Course that's very proper to be taken under Affliction. *Surely it is meet to be said unto God, &c.* And it will evidently appear so, if we consider

(1.) To whom it is to be said. Namely, unto God, who is offended, and does correct his offending Creatures. He is their rightful absolute Sovereign, and to Him they owe all the Service they are capable of, or he requires: Whatever is signified to be his Will has the
 force

force of a Law, to which they are obliged to conform themselves: their neglecting or refusing is Iniquity; 'tis acting crookedly and perversely; and this Iniquity is a just Offence to God: Now when the Creature has thus offended Him, and fallen under his Frowns, it's certainly very proper He shou'd confess this to God, and own before Him his Right to govern and punish Offenders. SERM. V.

(2.) It is meet, if we consider who is to say this: Namely, the Sinner, the same Person that has done Iniquity and offended God. Now, it's fit that he who has wrong'd his God shou'd own it, and take the shame of it to himself: It's meet that He who has injur'd his Maker in not obeying his good and righteous Laws, and has hereby brought that Sorrow upon himself which is the Wages of Unrighteousness; I say, its fit that such a One shou'd own his Sufferings to be just, and, upon his bended Knees, ask the Pardon of his Offences; that He shou'd bow to his Lord who frowns upon Him, and tremble for Fear of greater Wrath, than what is yet gone out from the Lord against Him. Is it not fit that he shou'd lay down his Arms, own himself a Rebel, and submit? That he shou'd confess, *I have sinned*, and charge himself home with it, and acknowledge that he hath justly suffer'd upon the Account of it.

(3.) It's meet this shou'd be said unto God, if we consider the Circumstances wherein the Sinner is to say it. Namely, when the Rod of

SERM. God is upon Him: The smart of it shou'd not

V.



then provoke him to rage against the Author of his Sufferings, but bring down his high Spirit, and soften his hard Heart: it shou'd humble and abase Him, and make Him own that God is doing himself Justice whilst he is chastising Him. Now its meet he shou'd say this unto God upon the follow Accounts.

(1.) Because his Sufferings are just. The Sorrows He now feels are what God warned him of before: He was plainly told that if He did so and so, he must fall under his Resentments; but the Sinner wou'd not reverence the Authority of God, who commanded him not to Sin, nor fear the Wrath of God, who threaten'd him if he did Sin. God is by this means Vindicating his own Law from the Creatures Contempt of it, and making Men see, whether *they* will regard his Word or no, that *He will* regard it, and maintain the Honour of it.

(2.) Because his Affliction is merciful, and less than Iniquity deserves. The Offender has by Transgression forfeited all into the Hands of Justice, and the Punishment of his Sin might have been much more severe than it is. He might have been made every way wretched and miserable; but yet he enjoys many good Things; in Body, in Estate, and in Mind too; and he shou'd take it as a Favour that he is not consumed to the uttermost.

(3.) Because God designs the Sinner good when He chastises him. The *Ax* is not laid

to

to the Root of the Tree, but to the dead and superfluous Branches, that these may be pruned, and not cut down and burned. It is not only to shew his hatred of Sin, and jealousy for his own Law and Government; but also to recover the Transgressor, bring him back to God and a Sense of Sin, and make him meet for his special Love and Favour.

(4.) Because thus the End and Advantage of Affliction will be secured. Is it not fit that God shou'd have his End and Design in afflicting you? saying this will answer his End; and its therefore meet you *shou'd* say it. His design is to bring the Sinner to Submission, to own his suffering for Sin to be just, and to declare his Resolution against it.

(5.) Because its the Way to prepare him for Deliverance from the Afflictions he is under. When the End thereof has been answer'd upon him, He's ready for Deliverance: and when he hath said thus unto God he hath done him all the Honour that he can do him.

Now, by way of Application.

[1.] What can you say against this Method? Is it not fit to be said unto God, I have born Chastisement, I will not offend any more? &c. certainly no better Advice can be given to a Person in such Circumstances, however unwilling a proud, corrupted, hard Heart may be to comply with it. Let me propose to your Consideration the following Things.

(1.) Have

SERM.

V.

(1.) Have you not done Iniquity? Which of all the Sufferers in the present Visitation can stand forth, and say, that he has not wronged God his Maker? Who can say that he hath no Sin; that his Heart and Hands are clean? If you had never offended God, nor broke his Law, there might be some Colour for refusing the Advice; but *he that says he hath no Sin, deceives himself.*

(2.) Is it not meet that God shou'd chastise you for the Iniquity that you do? Can you say that you ought to be let alone, and suffer'd to go on in your Transgressions as long as ever you please? Are there any arrived to such a Pitch of Prophaneness as this? What, has God no Right to lay Restraints upon you? has not he who made you a Right to rule his own Work, and prescribe to his own Creatures what he wou'd have 'em do, or forbear; and, when they won't act agreeable to his Will, to make 'em sensible of his Displeasure?

(3.) Shou'd you not humble your selves when he *does* Chastise you for Sin? If he may rebuke Offenders, surely they are to take some Notice of it. No one in his Senses will say, he may go on in Sin as he did, that he may love his Lusts, neglect his Duty, and disregard the Frowns of God.

(4.) Is it not meet that you resolve and promise for the future that what has been an Offence and Injury to God and his Grace, and a hurt to your selves; that what has brought you under

the

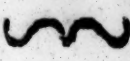
the Frowns of Heaven, and exposed you to eternal Misery, shou'd be renounced and abandoned? shou'd not you fortify your selves against Relapses into any thing of that sort for the Time to come?

(5.) Shou'd not you desire divine Assistance and Teaching to that End? We often find our Judgments convinced of Duty; we discern the Reasonableness of God's Service and approve of it; but our Wills are prone to draw us aside to that which Conscience condemns as foolish and wicked. Now, whilst we find an Aversion to the service of God, and an Inclination to Sin, which of our selves we cannot overcome; what can be more reasonable than, that we beg Light from above to shine into our Minds, that we implore the Aids of Heaven, to perswade our Wills, effectually, and bring them over from their perverse disobedient Temper to God and Duty? that we beg a deep Impression upon our Hearts of the good Things we know, look up to God for his Spirit whose Help we want, and always apply to him with fervent Cries, and Importunity as the Case requires?

[2.] I wou'd further ask, have you taken this Method in your Afflictions?

(1.) Have you said, *I have born Chastisement, I will not offend any more, what I see not, teach thou me; if I have done Iniquity, I will do no more?* Or have you been hard and unrelenting? while the Hand of God has been stretch'd out, what has been the Temper of your Spirits? have you

SERM. you own'd that the Hand of God was upon you

V.  for your Iniquity, and confess'd his Righteousness, Wisdom, and Goodness? Have you been Submissive; or Stubborn and Refractory? Were your Spirits unbroken and fretful against God? Did you complain of his Dealings, or murmur at his Hand, as if he did you wrong? Look back upon, and carefully review what it was that you said when under Affliction: did you bemoan yourselves that you were so base as to affront the great God, and trample upon his Laws? did you humble your selves under his mighty Hand? did his Rod seal Instruction, lead you to condemn your selves, and ascribe Righteousness to your Maker?

(2.) Have you said this unto *God*? You shou'd not only say it, but say it unto *God*, confess it before *Him*. Thus your Submission shou'd be made: have you then with deep Prostration cast your selves at *his* Footstool, acknowledged the many Transgressions you are chargeable with, renounced your Sin with Weeping and Supplication, and *accepted the Punishment of your Iniquity*? It is not barely saying these Things, but saying them in a *Religious manner*, that will serve the Turn: A saying them as in the Presence of the great God, with Reverence and Submission to the Divine Authority, and, at the same time, bringing your selves under Bonds to the *Performance of them*.

(3.) Have

(3.) Have you said these Things with *Conviction*, that it was *meet* to be said so and so? Its a thing that, in Circumstances of Affliction, you are very much concern'd to do. Have you been convinced that his Sovereignty shou'd be own'd? That you ought to confess the Injustice of what you have done, and retract it? Did you see the *Meetness* of resolving no more to offend, and declaring this to the Honour of God and his Government? Did you regret the Opposition you made to the Sovereign of Heaven and Earth, and renounce it from your Heart? Were you willing to give God the Glory that belongs to him as the Ruler of the World and the Corrector of his Creatures, and to take to your selves the shame that belongs to Transgressors? Were your Convictions deep and strong, and were you satisfied that it was not a thing indifferent, but what you ought to do?

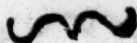
(4.) What Care have you taken to perform what you said? When you have said this under a Conviction that it was *meet*, you must not go your Ways, and think no more of it. This once said lays you under strong Obligations to great Care and Watchfulness to make it good. Has this been your great Concern that the Lord most high shou'd be honour'd by you? Has it been your Care to do whatsoever he prescribes you by his Law, and to submit to whatsoever he appoints in the Course of his Providence? Has Sin been the Object of
your

SERM. Fear, I mean, the Fear of Abhorrence? Have
V. you fear'd it because God is offended with it,
 because it is Iniquity and Injustice to him? Have you watch'd and striven with yourselves, and by earnest Prayer with God, that you might no more be drawn aside?

[3.] Thus only can you hope to have your Afflictions issue well. This is the way God hath prescribed for Sinners to take in their Affliction: it's the way in which the Design of Afflictions will be answer'd, and the way for the Sinner to obtain Deliverance. If you be not brought to humble your selves under the Hand of God, either he will give over contending with you in this Way, and leave you to a reprobate Mind, to Work all Iniquity with Greediness, till the Measure of Iniquity is full, and you are ripe for everlasting Ruin; or else he will go on to contend till He has made a full End of you. Afflictions will not issue well unless you give God the Glory of the Law you have broken, and engage your selves to Him for the future; but if you take this Course, He will accept your Submission; He will hear you bemoaning yourselves, and pity you: He'll grant you the necessary Teachings of his Word and Spirit in all those Things He wou'd have you know: He'll acquaint you what is the Sin you are to avoid, what is the Duty you are to do, and how it must be done: He'll make the Impression deep and strong; and so incline and fortify your Wills, that none of the Tempta-

tions

tions that lie in your way shall be able to SERM.
prevail against you. V.



I shall close all with a Word or two of Direction.

(1.) Endeavour to be deeply affected with a Sense of the divine Sovereignty and Purity. Acknowledge, Reverence and Adore God as the absolute Sovereign Lord of all. Don't satisfy yourselves with some general loose Apprehensions of this thing; but bring it home to your selves, and fix it upon your Hearts, that God is above all, that every reasonable Creature is his Subject, and that He has a Right to prescribe to 'em what Measures of Action He sees fit, and to threaten the Disobedient with what Penalties he pleases.

(2.) Endeavour to understand well the Foulness and Hatredness of Sin, as it is opposite to the Holy Nature and Law of God. There is an Iniquity, a Crookedness in Sin: it's the Perverseness of the Creature, the wrong Plie and Bias of all it's Faculties: Where this has the Ascendant in the reasonable Nature, it makes it the very reverse of what it shou'd be, and incapable in it's present Situation of answering the End for which it was made.

(3.) Endeavour to acquaint your selves particularly with your own Guilt. Look back upon the Temper of Mind in which you have lived, and the Course you have acted. Bring your
Sins

SERM. Sins again and again to Remembrance, that you

V. may know how to make a right Judgment of
 W 'em, that you may consider their Number, their
 Heinousness, and the many Aggravations that
 attend 'em; the Deepness of the Stain they
 have brought upon your own Souls; the Light
 and Mercy you have sinned against; with what
 Stubbornness and Obstinacy it has been done;
 and against how many Means used by Heaven
 to reclaim you.

(4.) Be assured God has a kind and gracious
 Design in all the Chastisements He lays upon
 you. It's a fine Distinction the Apostle makes,
 Heb. xii. 10. *They verily (that is, the Fathers of
 our Flesh) for a few Days. chasten'd us after their
 own Pleasure; but He for our Profit that we
 might be Partakers of his Holiness.* God debates
 in Measure, and in Mercy: He chastises in such
 a Manner as is proper to awaken the Sinner to
 consider what he has done, to affect Him with
 his evil Conduct, and bring him back again to
 God.

(5.) Remember that by following the Advice
 in the Text, you conform your selves to the
 Design of God's Providence. By Sin you have
 put your selves quite out of the way wherein
 God design'd you shou'd be; by suffering he in-
 tends to bring you into the way again; So that,
 by following this Advice under it, you have
 Reason to expect the Blessing which God hath
 promised to them that return, and that is, *to be
 Partakers of his Holiness.*

S E R.



S E R M O N VI.

The Manner and Advantage of setting God
always before Us,

P S A L M XVI. 8.

I have set the Lord always before me.

TH E Words give us an Account of the SERM.
VI.
Psalmists Practice; *He sets the Lord al-*
ways before Him. This is the genuine Effect of
a reigning Principle of Grace in the Heart, and
must therefore be One of the most undeceiving
and certain Evidences of our Sincerity towards
God: 'tis quite the reverse to the Character
of the wicked, Psal. x. 4. *God is not in all their*
Thoughts; yea, They say unto God depart from
Us, Job xxii. 17.

And I don't know any one Thing I can
recommend to *your* Practice, that has a more di-
rect Tendency and powerful Influence to pro-
mote the Life and Power of Godliness than this;
it is of all others the most likely Way to make

K

you

SERM. you Sincere in all you do with God and Man,
 VI. to stir you up to Diligence and Steadiness in
 the Work of God, to make Religion pleasant
 when you labour in it, and your Reflections
 comfortable, when you come to die. Here is
 the Example of a Person concerning whom we
 have the Divine Testimony, that he was One
after Gods own Heart, which shews us, that to
set the Lord always before us, is a very great
 and material Ingredient in the Character of a
 good Man. *I have set the Lord, &c.* In speak-
 ing to 'em I wou'd shew,

I. What it is to set the Lord before Us.

II. What it is to set the Lord *always* be-
 fore us.

III. Recommend this to your Practice,

I. I wou'd enquire what the Psalmist means
 by setting the Lord before Him. And here it
 may not be amiss to observe that some of
 the *Heathen Philosophers* have recommended it
 to their Pupils as a very useful Practice in the
 Conduct of Life, to provoke and encourage to
 good and generous Actions, that they shou'd al-
 ways conceive some great and virtuous Man,
 of whom they had an high Veneration, as al-
 ways standing by and observing them, ready
 to applaud or censure what they did: But how
 weak, low, and ineffectual a Restraint from
 Evil, and Incentive to Good, is this, in Com-
 parison

parison of the Method which the Psalmist took? SERM.

I have set the Lord always before me.

VI.

The force of this lies in the Greatness of the Object he proposes to himself, than which nothing can have a greater Efficacy. The *Lord before Thee*; Man, surely thou canst not forget it: Can any thing overbear the Influence of such a Thought, or make thee act unworthy of such a Presence? is the Lord before whom Angels bow and Devils tremble, is such a One by thee, and observing thee? and can any Thought have greater Force than this? One wou'd think it impossible such a Thought shou'd be suppress'd and born down by any thing whatsoever; but that sad Experience proves it may be so: it is the *Lord* that is set before thee; which implies several Things; the Psalmist took several Views of the Lord to affect his Soul.

(1.) He consider'd him as his Lord and Governor; his universal Lord who had a Right to him, and all his Service; who had given him a Rule to direct his Conduct, and thus laid an Obligation upon him with Respect both to the inward and outward Man. He consider'd that God had a Right to direct his Thoughts, Words and Actions, and that he himself had no Claim to act as he pleased; but was bound to act with Regard to the Will and Honour of God, and to make all his own Inclinations and Interests stoop and give way to his Authority: that to this he must pay an unrestrained Regard, and be careful to do nothing inconsistent with it.

SERM. Thus the Psalmist set the Lord before him, the

VI. Lord and Governour of all, as his Lord and
 Governour.

(2.) He *set the Lord before him* as one always present with Him. Though he cou'd not tell how to explain the divine Omnipresence, or knew not the Nature and Manner of it; yet he was fully assur'd there was such a thing and indeed it is evident to all from the Effects of it; for no Being can act where it is not: Now since God every where sustains and upholds all things, he must be every where present: and the Scripture, wherein God himself guides our Thoughts, directs Us thus to conceive of Him: *The Heaven is his Throne, and the Earth is his Footstool, and he fills Heaven and Earth*, which are commonly put in Scripture for the whole Universe, *Gen. i. 1. In the beginning God created the Heaven and Earth*, that is, the whole Frame of Things; so in *Psal. cxxxix. 7. Whither shall I go from thy Presence, &c.* There is no Place where God does not come how remote or obscure soever; nay, the very *Heaven of Heavens cannot contain Him*: He's not confined in any Place, but is present in all Places: The *Knowledge of this indeed is too wonderful for us; it is high, we cannot attain unto it.* It's certain there is no Place where God is not, and yet no Place does or can include or comprehend him: We must admire and adore what we cannot fathom. When the Psalmist says, *He set the Lord always before him*; his Meaning

ing is, that he remember'd he was always before God, immediate to the Divine Presence and cou'd not be otherwise; for *He is not far from every One of us*, Acts xvii. 27. The Psalmist remember'd God was present with his Body when cover'd with the thickest Darknes; and he also regarded him as present to his very Soul. *He sees in secret*, and is acquainted with our Designs Purposes and Inclinations: No Thought can be with-holden from him, Job xlii. 2. Yea, *He understands our Thoughts afar off*. Psalm cxxxix. 2.

(3.) His *setting the Lord before Him* implies, that he regarded God as the most exact and curious Observer of what he thought and did. There is no Circumstance how minute soever that escapes his Notice: We are often so engaged as not to observe our selves; but we don't pass without his Remarks upon us, and *this* the Psalmist attended to. God is said to ponder our Ways, Prov. v. 21. *The ways of a Man are before the Lord, and he pondereth all his Goings*. He not only sees 'em; but observes 'em with the most critical Nicety and Exactness: And the Psalmist cou'd not but think it highly proper, since he had so curious an Observer of what he did, frequently and habitually to think of this and attend to it.

Nay, God is said to *weigh our Spirits*. Prov. xvi. 2. that is, he observes 'em more narrowly than we ourselves do: We often act without thinking why we act, and upon what grounds

SERM. we do it; but God, who observes our Actions,

VI. considers the Spring and Original of them, upon what Designs we proceed. The Psalmist set the Lord before Him as his Observer, to whom his very Thoughts lay naked and exposed, and there is a great deal of Reason for this in order to affect us the more: God has been pleased to represent the Notices he takes of us in such a manner as is very apt to strike us: Among Men it's usual to put down in Books what is remarkable and they wou'd remember: So, as to our Actions, nay, our Duties, God is said to *write 'em down*, or to make a *Memorandum* of 'em.

(4.) His setting the Lord before him implies his Regard to him as a Judge, who wou'd reward or punish according to what he did. *Prov. xxiv. 12.* A ready Assistance to the Poor had been before recommended, and a great many were backward to such Work; and here they are ready to say they did not know it; but he knows it and pondereth it; *And shall not he render to every Man according to his Works?* He considers that God has a Right to give us Laws, and has therefore a Right to take an Account how we observe 'em. This God is present with us; his Eyes pierce into the inmost Recesses of the Soul; and therefore he wou'd have his Mind imprest with this Thought, We don't take in the whole Notion of a Lord or Governour, unless we take in this of his being a Judge. *I the Lord search the Heart; I try the Reins to give every Man according to the Fruit of*

of his Doings. Jer. xvii. 10. And so we are told elsewhere, that *every secret Thing whether good or bad shall be brought into Judgment*, Eccle. SERM. VI.

xii. 14. A Distribution shall then be made either of a glorious Reward or terrible Vengeance according as they have behaved. The Psalmist wou'd therefore consider the Lord as the judge of all inasmuch as all his Actions and Principles were to come before his Tribunal, to pass his Judgment, and to be determin'd upon by him. One wou'd think it impossible that when our everlasting Happiness and Misery depend entirely upon him, we shou'd not be very much affected with it. This seems to be implied in the Psalmists *setting the Lord before him*. We are now in next Place

II. To shew what may be understood by setting the Lord *always* before us. And here I wou'd premise,

(1.) That we are not to suppose that the Psalmist thought He cou'd by any act of his Mind make God present where He was not, or more truly and properly present where he was. God is really with us whether we think of it or not. Our most attentive Consideration, our most firm and riveted Perswasion of his Presence makes him really no nearer us; nor does our entire Forgetfulness and Neglect of him make him less near us than he was.

(2.) We must not suppose him to mean that he did every Moment think of God; that whatever he did, and wherever he went, this

SERM. was actually upon his Mind mixing with every

VI. Thought. The words are not to be taken in so strict a Sense; for it's naturally impossible they should be true in this Sense, and it's inconsistent with our present State and Circumstances whilst we are in this World. We have Bodies that have many Wants and Weaknesses which must be provided for, and these will necessarily take up much of our Time and Employment, and many of our Thoughts; and such is the Weakness of the human Mind that whilst we attend with any Degree of Application to one Thing, it must of Necessity keep out every thing else from being the immediate Object of our Thoughts; and the Affairs of Life are sometimes to be thought of with so much Application as will certainly keep out other Things.

This being premised it will not be difficult to point out what the *Psalmist* must mean when he says, that he *set the Lord always before him*. Namely,

(1.) That he did *firmly* believe God was always present with him as his Ruler, Observer and Judge. He had a full Persuasion of this Truth: He saw the best Reason to believe it was so; and he saw it was of a great deal of Importance to him to regard it: He therefore took Pains to establish himself in an unshaken Assent to it.

(2.) That he bore upon his Mind an habitual and lively Sense of this. It was not a cold heartless Assent to the Truth of it that satisfied

fied Him; but He endeavour'd to have such a Sense of it, as wou'd influence all the Motions of his Heart, and all the Actions of his Life. He wou'd think, and speak, and act as a Man under such Impressions; and consider that, wherever *He* was, there *God* was; and wherever *God* was, there was the *Lord*, his *Observer* and *Judge*: this struck his Mind with an habitual Awe; it fill'd Him with a concern to behave as became that Presence, and made him serious, thoughtful and circumspect: He consider'd that Thoughts are as Words and Actions to God, that is to say, are more fully understood by him than what we say or do is, or can be understood by our fellow Men. Even as a Man, who is going a Journey, though he don't every step of his way think of his Journey's End; yet He has such a fixed Sense of it upon his Mind as keeps Him from standing still or wandering out of his Way; so it is with every One that sets the Lord always before Him: that is, He bears upon his Mind an habitual and lively Sense of the divine Presence with him.

(3.) That he did often *actually* think of God as present and *set* himself to do so. He wou'd set his Mind to work purposely upon this Subject; with Care and seriousness to consider this Matter, that the dying Sense of it might be renew'd upon his Mind, and become more vigorous and lively. He endeavour'd to work it upon his Spirit, that he might be rais'd to a suitable Degree of seriousness to attend upon Duty,

SERM. VI. Duty, or be furnish'd with sufficient Resolution against assaulting Temptations. He wou'd often put his Mind into a Train of Thoughts of this sort, and wou'd take Care these Thoughts shou'd frequently recur upon Him while He was employ'd in common Affairs. He wou'd often say, *God is here; Thou Lord see'st me*: (for you must know that if this Principle be not brought down to Practice, and such Thoughts frequently stir'd up in our Minds, it will signify Nothing) And he wou'd apply it to particular Instances: Give me leave to mention one or two wherein 'tis especially requisite, and wherein we may suppose this good Man wou'd take particular Care to set the Lord before him.

(1.) When he engaged in his immediate Worship. He wou'd urge this upon his Soul with all the Force he cou'd possibly give it: "Now, my Soul, thou art going to stand before the Lord, to attend Him in his more immediate Presence; beware that nothing unbecoming be admitted, nothing that shall be offensive to the God with whom thou hast to do."

Suppose him in his Closet; and then the Sense of his Mind is to this Purpose, "No mortal Eye can here approach me: it's true, I have no Witness and so can have no Accuser; but God is here, and He is more than ten thousand Witnesses: though my Door is shut, he is not, he cannot be excluded: He observes how I spend this Time; whether I am serious or not, whether I pray and read and meditate

“ meditate and commune with my own Heart
“ or no ; He observes all this, and how I per-
“ form it; I lie all naked and open to his Eye,
“ yea, my very Heart with all its Motions is
“ manifest in his Sight: Look to it then, O
“ my Soul, that thy Temper and Behaviour
“ at this Time be such as will stand the Test
“ of an Omniscient Being: Thy Father sees
“ in secret; let this engage thee to be sincere :
“ It will give Thee the highest Pleasure, if
“ thou art so: There is not a wish in the most
“ retired foldings of thy Heart, but he per-
“ fectly knows it.”

When the Man of God enters the Assembly,
the House of the Lord, He says to Himself,

“ In this Croud I stand as much exposed to the
“ View of God, as if I stood all alone before
“ his piercing Eyes; all the Motives upon
“ which I come are thoroughly open to Him;
“ He perfectly knows all my Meanings; He
“ exactly distinguishes between Truth and Ap-
“ pearances, and needs not be inform'd what
“ Regards I pay to his Command in coming
“ here; nor how far, either the Fear or Fa-
“ vour of Men have had a Hand in bringing
“ me to his House: He knows how far a Sense
“ of Duty, and the Desire and Hope of a Blef-
“ sing, have drawn me hither: He separates
“ in his View the Customary, from the consci-
“ entious Worshipper; the formal and vain-
“ glorious, from the sincere and upright One:
“ Now therefore, I charge thee, O my Soul, be
“ in-

SERM. "intent and close: God is in this Place, and

VI. "it's fit thou shoud'st know and consider it:
 ~~~~~ "He sees every wandering Thought, every  
 "dull Affection, and every careless Worship-  
 "per; and he will spie *Thee* out with Dis-  
 "pleasure amidst the Throng if thou art such  
 "a One: Keep thine Eye upon God in every  
 "Petition when thou joine'st in Prayer, and  
 "don't mock him by asking a Blessing thou  
 "hast no desire of receiving, or by asking it  
 "when really thou dost not keep thy Eye up-  
 "on him, as present with *Thee*: When thou  
 "confesse'st Sin, see that it be with a deep Sense  
 "of it upon thy Heart: Regard his Presence  
 "whilst his Word is preach'd: Hear, O my  
 "Soul, now it's God that speaks; the Com-  
 "mand is his, and let there be a willing un-  
 "reserv'd Obedience: Remember that all He  
 "says is thy Duty, and that all he forbids is  
 "Sin: the Promise is his, rejoice in it and de-  
 "pend upon it; the Threatening is his and  
 "comes from his Mouth, tremble and stand  
 "in Awe of it: Remember too, O my Soul,  
 "that he remarks what Entertainment his Mes-  
 "sage has from thee, and that, if thou wilt not  
 "hear his Commands and Offers, He will not  
 "at last hear thy Cry: Say then, is my Lord  
 "here? is it his Voice? shall he not see me all  
 "Submission, and all Obedience; trembling  
 "at his Word and saying, *Lord what would'st*  
 "*thou have me to do?*"

So if we suppose the good Man coming to the Lord's-Table, he casts his Eye on the sacred Symbols and Cries out, " These are the awful

SERM.  
VI.

" Tokens of the divine Presence; these are the  
" solemn Pledges by which Christ makes over  
" himself to me; God is here to find out the  
" Hypocrite with Abhorrence, and to view the  
" Sincere Soul with Pleasure and Delight: let  
" me see to it that I act as under his Eye, that  
" I do indeed act as if my bodily Eye saw  
" him present: let me be assured that he sees  
" through the thickest Disguise I can throw  
" over my self; the *Deceiver* here will cer-  
" tainly be *accursed*: Dare not then, O my  
" Soul, to refuse him any thing he has a Right  
" or lays a Claim to; nor give it to any other  
" but himself: He claims thy Heart and all  
" thy Powers to be his for ever; let him *have*  
" what He *claims*."

(2) We may suppose the Psalmist wou'd set the Lord before Him when tempted to Sin. When the Prospect of Pleasure or Gain offer'd themselves, and induced Him to quarrel with the plain Rule of Duty; when Difficulties lay in the way of his Duty and he had a Prospect of suffering for the sake of a steady Adherence to God; then He wou'd set the Lord before him, ~~and say~~, " What will all the Praise of  
" Men amount to, if God my rightful Lord,  
" my strict Observer, and my final Judge be  
" offended and condemn Me? Will the pre-  
" sent Pleasures of Sin countervail the Pleas-  
" ures



SERM. " fures I shall hereafter lose by Sin? Are there

VI. " any Dangers or Difficulties in the way of  
 " Duty comparable to his Wrath, and that  
 " Anguish he will inflict upon the Disobedient?  
 " *What will it profit me, if I gain the whole*  
 " *World and lose my own Soul? or what shall I*  
 " *have in Exchange for my Soul?* I now charge  
 " thee, consider where thou art, and before  
 " whom thou standest: The Lord is before thee,  
 " and he sees what it is thou lovest most, and  
 " givest the Preference to: He sees the way  
 " that thou takest; and if it be wicked, so sure  
 " as he sees it, so sure will he at last expose  
 " and condemn it: Shall I not for his Favours  
 " slight all the paltry Offers of the Enemy:  
 " Sure I am, He stands by, and is pleased with  
 " my present faithful Adherence to Him; and  
 " he will e'er long set a glorious Crown upon  
 " my Head, and do me Honour before all the  
 " World; but if I had Inclinations to comply,  
 " how dare I think of doing it, when I see be-  
 " fore me the Almighty Hand ready to avenge  
 " the Affront?"

It he is tempted with Prospect of Secrecy  
 and Impunity in Sin, He sets the Lord before  
 him as his Observer and Judge, " Alas! the  
 " Midnight Darkness, and Shine of Noon are  
 " both alike to Him; He will not want Evi-  
 " dence to convict me though no Body is here:  
 " 'tis in vain that I think to cover over the  
 " Sin with plausible Excuses and false Names:  
 " The Disguise is too thin to deceive him whose  
 " Under,

“ Understanding is infinite: He knows all  
“ the Springs of Action and can trace me step  
“ by step up to the first Original of it. Have  
“ I a Prospect of shifting the Wickedness from  
“ one Hand to another that the true Author may  
“ be conceal’d; Alas! this is no Concealment  
“ from him: cou’d I remove it to the Distance  
“ of a thousand Persons; he is a Witness to all  
“ my Art, and wou’d punish the Sin before  
“ all the World.”

(3.) When the Psalmist says, He set the Lord  
always before Him, we must suppose he wou’d  
be careful to do this, when he begun and set  
out in the Actions of every Day. According-  
ly we find him saying, Psal. cxxxix. 18. *When  
I awake, I am still with thee.* His Mind began  
to work towards God when he first open’d his  
Eyes: “ I am now, q. d. entering upon ano-  
“ ther Day, through every Moment and Ac-  
“ tion of which, I am sure to be under the Ob-  
“ servation of the great God: May this Heart  
“ of mine be so affected with the Sense of it,  
“ that I may not forget it all the Day long,  
“ that I may not act without some becoming  
“ Regards to it; let me now revolve the Mat-  
“ ter over a little, till my Heart grows warm  
“ and my Soul is tinctured with such a Sense of  
“ it as shall remain upon me all this Day:  
“ God is now present; let me affect my Heart  
“ with this Thought before the World take  
“ hold of me, that the Sense of it may be the  
“ more effectual: Let my Heart the great Foun-  
“ tain

SERM. "tain of Action be thus season'd with a Sense  
 VI. " of God, that so all I say or do may savour  
 ~~~~~ " of him through the Day."

(4.) We must suppose he wou'd *set the Lord before Him*, when any thing more than Ordinary occurred in Life. Suppose him to meet with Disappointments and Afflictions, he then *sets the Lord before Him*. " Well, says he, " God is the Author of this and the other Evil; " He has either appointed or permitted it; for " *Afflictions do not rise out of the Dust, nor Trouble spring out of the Ground*. While I am " thus afflicted, he has some great Design in " View, or else he wou'd never put me to " this Pain or Sorrow: He wou'd never take " such or such a Comfort from me, or disappoint my Hopes of such or such Things: I " will endeavour to see God ordering and disposing these Afflictions: limiting of them, and " over-ruling them to their proper Ends; regulating my Sorrows to my Necessities, my " Burdens to my Strength, and proportioning " his Assistance to my Patience "

Again, if the Blessings or Comforts of Life flow in upon him, he then sets the Lord before him: " God is the Fountain of Goodness; from " him these Mercies come: He is now by me, " and observing whether I receive 'em with a " becoming Humility, Caution and Thankfulness, or no: He is by to observe how I use " 'em, whether with Care that he may be glorified, the World and Church, my self and
 " others

“ others better’d by ’em: He takes Notice SERM.
“ whether I grow more in Love with him for VI.
“ what he bestows, and whether I am more di-
“ ligent in his Service by how much the more
“ he trusts me with: He sees whether I grow
“ proud, careless and sensual; or whether I grow
“ more afraid of abusing so great a Trust.”

So when He undertakes Affairs of great Concern and Importance, He then sets the Lord before him: “ God his here; He observes and
“ knows the way I take: He is ready to be
“ my Guide, my Assistant: It is to him I must
“ look as the Author of my Success: He takes
“ Notice whether I design his Glory in this
“ Affair or no; and whether this is the govern-
“ ing View: He observes what Regards I pay
“ to his Law in all this Work; whether my
“ Heart be right with him; whether I am not
“ anxiously solicitous about it; whether I re-
“ fer it to his Disposal, and cheerfully com-
“ mit all my Affairs into his Hand; whether
“ I am upon my Guard against Temptations
“ that lie in my Way, and depend upon him
“ for Preservation from ’em; whether I am
“ ready to ask his leave in going about it, and
“ his Direction to accomplish it; and to con-
“ secrate it to his Honour when I have ob-
“ tain’d it.”

I wou’d now in the last Place,

III. Briefly recommend this to your Practice.
And

L

(I.) It

SERM. (1.) It may be recommended to you as the
VI. most pleasant Way of living in the World.

How delightful and entertaining will it make all that the Soul does, thus to have God always in View? This will give it a present Pleasure, and a strong security that this Pleasure shall never four upon it. What can give the Mind of Man a more pleasing Thought than this, that God, who is every where present is ever upon his Mind; that He, who is the Sum and Comprehension of all that's good and excellent is *his* Portion? What Satisfaction can a reasonable Creature have equal to that which results from the Consideration, that he aims at no lower an End in all he does than that which is supreme, nay, all in all; that there is none so high and excellent as him proposed for his Copy and Pattern; that He is imitating a Being whom the more he resembles the more noble and excellent he will be, and that every step he advances in likeness to him, makes a fresh Addition to his Happiness? What can be more delightful than to consider that he who now observes the sincerity and uprightness of his Heart is his Judge and Rewarder, and in the mean time till that glorious Day come, will support and strengthen, direct and succour Him?

No Pleasures on this side the Grave can equal this: None so pure, none so lasting, none so rational or satisfying. "Do all Men forsake
" me, yet does not God. Am I rob'd of every

" thing

“ thing else, yet none can steal away my God, SERM.
 “ Do all condemn me, yet they can’t execute VI.
 “ their Curses. My uprightness in his sight,
 “ whom I always regard as my Judge, this is
 “ a Stay and Comfort to me. Do I want suc-
 “ cess in the World, am I disappointed, or do
 “ I miss my Aim, yet my great Design shall
 “ not miscarry. I set him before me as my
 “ great End, and I shall see him in it at last.”

(2.) This will be the safest Course you can take. The best Antidote against all Temptations either from the Devil or wicked Men, or the peculiar Sin which you are most inclined to. This will keep you out of the Way of Temptations, break the force of ’em, and be the most effectual Way of reducing and bringing you back when you do fall by them, *Because he is at my right Hand*, (says the Psalmist in the next Words) *I shall never be moved.* q. d. tho’ I have no Strength or Might against the many Temptations wherewith I am assaulted; but shou’d, if left to stand by my self, be foil’d and overcome; yet because I have *always set the Lord before me*, therefore He is at my right Hand, and I have this Advantage by it, that he will support and strengthen, he will protect and defend me; so that I am under no Apprehensions of being moved away from my Duty by any of the Temptations that befall me: And as this was the Psalmists, so ’tis the Priviledge of all those who *set the Lord always before ’em*: hereby their Hearts are confirm’d and their Hands strengthen-

SERM. ed, so that no Threats or Sufferings can afflict or drive 'em from their God : Neither
 VI. the Temptations of the Devil, nor the Rage and Persecution of Men ; neither the combining force of Earth and Hell, nor their own Weaknesses and Corruptions shall ever move 'em. How safe a Course must the Psalmists be, *I have set the Lord always before me : because he is at my right Hand I shall not be moved.*

(3.) This will be of great Service and Advantage to you, as it keeps up and promotes a serious and devout Temper of Mind. There's no Method will preserve a holy Frame of Soul like it : This will be like Oil in the Lamp always supplying the Flame of Grace with fresh Fuel, and giving it a new Vigour to burn with more Fervour and Clearness : This will fit you for every Duty, and every Occurrence of Life. And in the last Place (to conclude)

(4.) This will greatly promote your Fitness for Heaven ; or make you ready to go and live in the immediate glorious Presence of God above. It will Familiarize the Thoughts of Heaven, and do a great deal towards countermpering your Souls to the heavenly State and Blessedness : You'll hereby bring much of Heaven to Earth, or, which is all One, raise your Souls from Earth to Heaven. This is truly to have our Conversation in Heaven ; the Presence of God being often put for Heaven
 it

it self, because he most gloriously displays, and most powerfully sheds the Influences of it upon the Inhabitants of those blessed Regions. SERM. VI.

Psal. xvi. 11. In thy Presence is Fullness of Joy, and at thy right Hand are Pleasures for evermore.

And again, being ever with the Lord, is a Phrase which signifies the whole of Heaven and Happiness. 1 *Thes. iv. 17.* And certain it is, that the more we now walk with God by Faith in the present Life and World, the more Familiar and the more Pleasant will the Thoughts of Heaven be to us, and the better shall we find our Souls suited and con-naturalized to the immediate Enjoyments of God above.





SERMON VII.

JESUS CHRIST the Fathers Servant.

MATTHEW XII. 18.

Behold, my Servant whom I have Chosen.

IN this Chapter we find our Lord working SERM.
 many glorious Miracles, and yet conceal- VII.
 ing himself from publick Notice. He makes
 no Ostentation of what he did; and in this we
 have a double Proof of his being sent of God,
 exactly answering the Character which the Je-
 wish Prophets gave of their *Messiah* that was to
 come: The Evangelist here quotes the Prophets
 Words, Isa. xlii. 1. *Behold my Servant, mine*
Elect. Jesus appears to be just such a One as
 the Prophets before described Him by the
 Spirit of God. No wonder, that we are call'd
 to behold Him, and that God owns Him as his
 Servant, his chosen Servant: It's well for us
 that he was so; and the thing deserves our best
 Attention: By such a Servant thus made Choice
 of, we are restored to Hope: Behold, your
L 4
Saviour,

SERM. Saviour, the Son of God becoming a Servant!

VII. that you, who were Slaves to Sin and condemn'd to an everlasting Exclusion from the Presence of God, might become his Sons again: Surely, never was so glorious a Servant; never were such sorry Children serv'd as we are. He is God's *chosen* Servant: it was infinite Wisdom and Goodness that chose Him: let us approve and adore the Choice this Day, and bless God for it: Never was any thing done in Heaven that had a kinder Aspect upon the Sons of Men. Towards our Improvement of these Words, I wou'd consider,

I. What a sort of Servant the Lord Jesus Christ is.

II. What the Service is, for which he was chosen.

III. How He came to be such a Servant.

IV. Why He wou'd be such a Servant.

V. What Regards are to be paid Him.

I. I wou'd in the first Place enquire what sort of a Servant the Lord Jesus Christ is. We have several Hints concerning this in the Text.

(I.) He is a *Chosen* Servant: pick't out, or chosen from Eternity to this Service by the Father: *He is predestinated among many Brethren that in all Things he might have the Pre-eminence.* He was ordained from Eternity in the Councils of Peace to the entire Work he
has

has undertaken and accomplish'd : Let us adore SERM.
the Wisdom of the Choice that fix'd upon VII.
One so fit for it, and admire the Love that
pitch'd upon One so excellent, to minister to
God for us, and to us for God.

(2) He is a *commissioned* Servant. He is authorized ; has the broad Seal of Heaven to shew for all that he does: He took not to himself this Honour, to be President over the House of God: *For no Man taketh this Honour to himself but he that is called of God.* Heb. v. 4. Now, this Servant has all the Authority of the God of Heaven to support Him; my Servant whom I uphold, Isa. xlii. 1. and what he does by Virtue of this Commission is no less than God's own Appointment. Rest satisfied then, Christian, and depend upon it with full Assurance and entire Confidence: Nothing that he does can ever be vacated or disannull'd: it must and will stand good: the unchangeable God, the God of Truth has settled and ordained it: From hence you may derive *strong Consolation who have fled for Refuge to this Hope.*

(3.) He is a Servant whom the Father has furnish'd and qualified for that Work. He is prepared and anointed with all the richest of the divine Gifts above his Fellows: *God gave not the Spirit by Measure unto Him,* John iii. 34. He has every Excellence that can make him a proper and acceptable Servant to God, and an Useful One to us: *He is full of Grace and Truth,* John i. 14. of Truth to teach us, and
give

SERM.

VII.

give us a firm Ground of Trust; and of Grace to pity, help and sanctify us: He is every way fit to go between the Holy God and Sinners, to take care of the Divine Perfections and bring the Sinner all that Succour his Case requires both for his Pardon, Sanctification, and Eternal Glory.

(4.) As a Servant he has his Work prescribed, and appointed to him. He cou'd go over all his Work, step by step, and say, this and the other *Commandment have I receiv'd of my Father. The Word which you hear is not mine but the Fathers which sent me*, John xiv. 24. And then, when He was to lay down his Life, He tells us expressly, that the Father had given him *this Power, to lay down his Life and to take it again*, John x. 18. And that, because of this, *the Father loved Him*, v. 17. It were almost endless to enumerate the several Assurances he gives us, that all he did and said, was of divine Appointment. *I speak nothing of my self but all that the Father hath taught me I speak. I do always those things that please Him*, and the like. That Regal Authority he is now exercising in the World above is as his Fathers commissioned Servant: *all Power*, says he, *is given me in Heaven and in Earth*, Mat. xxviii. 18. God has given him *a Name above every Name*, put all Things under his Feet, and made him Head over all Things to his Church: And we find, when our Lord was come to the End of his Day, and about to return to Him that sent Him,

Him, he said, *I have finish'd the Work which thou gavest me to do.* John xvii. 4. SERM.
VII.

(5.) He is a Servant to whom God bare Testimony by a Voice from Heaven: *this is my beloved Son: hear ye Him,* Mark ix. 7. There were moreover a long Train of Visible and glorious Miracles which had upon 'em the Signatures of divine Wisdom: And, last of all, God did declare Him to be his own Son by raising him from the Dead. No Man cou'd do those Works that He did unless God was with Him. John iii. 2. This was the Voice of Reason it self; and then, *Him bath God the Father sealed,* is what he said concerning himself, and made Notorious to the World. John vi. 27.

(6.) He is a Servant whom God accepted in all his Service. He always had the highest Approbation of his Father attending what he did: *I do always those things that please Him.* John viii. 29. There was neither excess nor defect in any single Instance of his mediatorial Service and Obedience.

(7.) He is a Servant that engaged himself to do his Fathers Will: so that he voluntarily took upon himself that Service to which he was chosen, and appointed. *I come,* says He, *to do thy Will, O God, yea, thy Law is within my Heart.* Psal. xl. 8. And again, *No Man taketh my Life from Me, but I lay it down of my self, and I will take it again,* John x. 18.

(8.) He is a Servant whom his Father has rewarded, and will reward.

He

SERM.

VII.

He has rewarded him with a *Name above every Name*, highly exalted him above all Heavens, and given him all *Power both in Heaven and Earth*: *Thrones, Principalities, Dominions and Powers are all made subject to him*; and unto him every *Knee shall bow*: Not One of all the Creation of God is exempted from doing him Homage: God has already given him a *seed to serve Him*: His Name and Honour has been spread thro' the World: great part of the Earth has been brought under Subjection to Him, and many Sons have through him been brought to *Glory*, who are to be the Crown of his mediatorial Undertaking, and the Ground of his everlasting Triumph: by him Sinners have Access to God, Acceptance with him, and pardon by him: the Image of God is again imprest upon the Souls of Men, and they are made meet for the heavenly Blessedness.

And e'er long the Lord Jesus will be more gloriously rewarded for his Service: He had *Respect to the Joy that was set before him* in all his Sufferings, and no doubt waits with great Pleasure for the arrival of that glorious Day: We are assured that in a little Time he will come again with the Character of Universal Judge, *array'd with his Fathers Glory, and with his own Glory, and with the Glory of his holy Angels*: Life and Death shall then be in his Hands, and Heaven and Hell at his Disposal: He must hear and decide all Causes both upon Men and Angels: then shall his Enemies go away with trembling,

trembling, while he is glorified in his Saints SERM.
and admired in all them that believe: Then will VII.
all things be put under his Feet, and the last
Enemy shall be utterly destroy'd: and when he
has order'd Devils and impenitent Sinners to
their Dungeon of Hell, he will rise from his
Throne with the loud Acclamations of all the
redeemed Company, and deliver up the Kingdom
to God even the Father that He may be all in all,
I Cor. xv. 24, 28.

I come now in the Second Place to enquire

II. What the Service is for which He was
chosen.

[1.] He is to rear up the Glory of God that
was fallen down in this World. The World
was made for the Glory of God, that is, to
display and represent before all reasonable Crea-
tures the glorious Perfections of it's Maker:
Man was prepared and fitted to observe what
God did, to give him the Praise of it, and send
up a Tribute of Glory to him from this lower
World; but we having all sinned and fallen
short of this Glory, to raise it up again is a
Service committed to the Lord Redeemer: He
is to recover to his Father that Glory which
was due to him: *Thou art my Servant in whom
I will be glorified*, Isa. xlix. 3. Now, his rear-
ing up the Glory of God in this World implies
the following things; He is to do it,

(1.) By declaring and publishing his Fathers
Glory to the World. The Knowledge of God
was by Mans Apostacy almost lost out of it:

The

SERM. The World has little Acquaintance with him

VII. where the Scripture does not come: the *Imaginations* of Men were *vain*, and their *foolish Hearts* *darken'd*; but the Lord Jesus Christ declares God in the World, and spreads abroad the Glory of his Perfections: He publishes the Fathers Honour, came down from his Fathers Bosom to *declare* him, and to scatter the Ignorance that cover'd the Face of the Earth.

Moreover, the Knowledge of God was not only almost lost out of the World; but that little Remnant which was left was ineffectual to sanctifying and saving Purposes: Men *held the Truth in Unrighteousness*, and, *when they knew God, glorified him not as God*. The Knowledge they had of God did not influence them to any Imitation of Him; it did not reign in 'em, nor fire them with Zeal for Him; but Christ comes to give Life and Spirit to the Knowledge of God that he declares, to make it sanctifying and saving: He is the Light of Souls, puts Life into 'em, and leads 'em to God; and herein he is the Fathers Servant. *I will give thee for a Light to the Gentiles*, and thou shalt be my Servant to convey Salvation to the Ends of the Earth, Isa. xlix. 6.

(2.) By a voluntary Obedience and Submission to his Fathers Law. Obedience to the divine Law was our Duty: herein we had fail'd and denied God his Glory; but what *we* wou'd not, that the Redeemer was willing to do: O wonderful Sight! to behold the Son of God in

our Nature obeying the Law, and Man, a reasonable Creature form'd to serve God, refusing that Obedience: here was Condescension indeed, that he who was above Law, shou'd become under Law: O! what Glory does hence redound to God? What Honour does Christ put upon his Fathers Law? rather than the Law shou'd not be obey'd, and God shou'd not have Honour paid Him, the Lord Jesus himself will come from Heaven and fulfil it.

(3) By gaining Sinful Souls to glorify God. He came to restore them to his Glory; to recover their Minds to glorify God, and their Persons to the Enjoyment of his Glory: He came to heal and cure 'em of that Alienation and Enmity they bear to his Glory; to convince 'em that this is a very unreasonable, wicked Temper and Frame of Mind; and to shew 'em, that by dishonouring God they act unworthy of themselves. He teaches 'em by his Word; he perswades and enclines 'em by his Spirit: thus he gains their Minds; and then he gains their Persons, to raise them whole and entire into the Glory of God. It is in the Glories of the other World that God is to be glorify'd perfectly, and thither Jesus, the Fathers Servant designs to raise up perishing Souls. *This is my Fathers Will, says Christ, that of all which he hath given me, I shou'd lose nothing, but raise it up at the last Day, John vi. 39.*

[2.] Another Part of this Servants Work is to redeem and restore the World to God. To
redeem

SERM. redeem it from the Apostacy it was in ; from

VII. the Guilt and Tyranny of Sin ; from the Curse
 of the Law and Bondage of Corruption ; and
 recover it to the Knowledge, Love and Service
 of its Maker, and to the everlasting Enjoyment
 of Him : *thus* fallen Men are to be restored to
 God, and brought and set before him in Glory,
 Isa. xlix. 3, *And said unto me, thou art my Ser-*
vant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified : and
 this is the Service in which thou shalt glori-
 fy me, ver. 6. namely, *in raising up the Tribes*
of Jacob, and restoring the preserved of Israel.
 Christ must redeem and restore 'em,

(1.) He must lay down his Life for 'em : that
 is, for the *Tribes of Jacob*. He must bear the
 Curse that it may not fall upon us ; and this
 he sustain'd both in his Body and Soul upon the
 Tree, at the Command of his Father, and as
 a Service done to Him : it was an Order the
 Father gave him, that he shou'd lay down his
 Life, and accordingly *he humbled himself, and*
became obedient unto Death, even the Death of the
Cross. O, what mysterious Wisdom and Love is
 here, that the Father shou'd command his only
 begotten Son to die for such as you and me in or-
 der to redeem and save us ; and that it shou'd
 be accounted a Piece of Service to God for him
 to lay down his Life for us ! the Curse threa-
 ten'd to sinning Man was, *Thou shalt surely die,*
 and therefore Christ, by submitting to Death in
 our stead was made a Curse for us,

(2.) He

(2.) He must also rescue himself from the Sufferings that he bore. He did not suffer merely for Sufferings sake: his Sufferings were hereupon acceptable because they wou'd redound to his Glory: And therefore it was his Fathers Order and Pleasure, that as soon as they had reach'd the Design intended, He shou'd throw them off, and rise again: which brings me to observe,

(3.) In obedience to his Father he must go to Heaven to intercede for us there. Hence he is call'd the *Minister* of the Sanctuary: Now, a Minister is a publick Servant, and Heaven is the great and glorious Sanctuary of God: there the Lord Jesus Christ officiates; and the Apostle accordingly speaks of Him as a *Minister of the true Sanctuary which the Lord pitched and not Man*; Heb. viii. 2. The Lord pitched and prepared it for him, and call'd him to it; and so he is serving God while he pleads his Obedience and Sufferings, that so the Blessings which Sinful imperfect Creatures want may be bestow'd upon them.

(4.) He must bring his redeemed ones Home to his Father by converting Grace. As it was his Fathers Pleasure they shou'd be redeem'd; so the Work of the Mediator is call'd the *Pleasure of the Lord that shou'd prosper in his Hand*, Isa. liii. 10. He it is that lays hold on Sinners, teaches, draws, perswades and enclines 'em to come to his Father. *Other Sheep I have*, says he, *which are not of this Fold: them also must I bring in.* John x. 16.

M

(5.)

SERM.

VII.

(5.) He must preserve Souls which he hath called and sanctified. He must keep them in Obedience, preserve them for his Father in their Faith and Love, and keep the tender relentings of Godly sorrow at Work in their Souls: You read of those that are *preserved in Christ Jesus and called*, Jude i. preserved in him, and preserved by him; because he must lose none of *those whom the Father hath given him*: He makes 'em safe against all the Workings of their own Lusts, against all the Rage and Practices of Hell, and against all the Offences and Stumbling-blocks they meet with in this World.

(6.) He must raise the Dead and Judge the World for God. Herein he ministers to the most high, and is his highest Minister: *The Father judgeth no Man; but hath committed all Judgment to the Son: that all Men shou'd Honour the Son, even as they Honour the Father*, John v. 22, 23. We are told, *He hath appointed a Day, [in the which he will Judge the World by that Man whom he hath ordained, Acts xvii. 31. He hath appointed a Man for that Day and the Work of it, who will recover from the Dead those whom the Father hath given him: This is a Piece of his Service, it being the Will of him that sent me, says Christ, that of all those he hath given me I shou'd lose nothing, but raise it up at the last Day, John vi. 39. He will send his Angels into all Parts of the World to gather his Elect, to call all Men and all Cases before Him to try them, to search them*

them through, and to determine concerning them. SERM.
VII.

(7.) He is to lead 'em to Heaven and present 'em to his Father there. Upon which account he is call'd *the Captain of their Salvation*, one that Heads them while they are on the Way to Glory, and brings them all to a compleat Salvation at last: "Thine they were, and I present 'em to thee according to the Counsel of thine own Will:" How shou'd Christians love this glorious One who has undertaken such a Service for such Creatures as we are? see, what an extensive Service it is, of what vast Account, and how much it cost him: He must die, and rise, and ascend, and have the *whole Affair* upon his Heart and Hands through all the Periods of Time, and must not give over a steady Pursuit of it till he has conquer'd such Hearts as ours, deliver'd us from the Power of Satan, and presented us to his Father with exceeding Joy. O, think of the Redeemers Love and of his Service, and learn to love and serve him. Again

[3.] Another part of this Servants Work is to build a Temple for his Father: A sacred House where God will dwell and reside for ever: the Temple, of God here below has been rased by Sin: the Name and Glory and gracious Presence of God have been banish'd out of it, that is, the *Soul* of Man: this was the Temple of God in our World originally; but he designs to return and take up a Lodging

SERM. there again: This was intimated in the *Taber-*
 VII. *nacle of old*, which was no sooner set up in its

Beauty; but He comes, and with illustrious Brightness takes Possession of it, with a Cloud which was his travelling Habit. Now, this Building of his Fathers Temple contains in it these several Acts and Works,

(1.) His hewing the Stones for this Temple; his cutting them out that they may be fit to lie ready in the Building: hard Hearts must be cleft and broken, stony Hearts must be soften'd and made pliable, fit to be work'd into any shape the divine Wisdom shall see meet: They must be made tender as Flesh by the Spirit of Christ whose Office and Work this is.

(2.) His laying them in their Order. Putting them into their proper Places, and jointing them in the Building, so that each may contribute its share towards the compleat Structure: The Temple is to be one Frame, and all the Parts must be laid together to compose the whole: By the Work of conviction upon the Souls of Men the Stones are hew'd, by the Work of converting Grace they are made alive, (for it is to be *a living Temple*) and being made alive they are set and jointed, each in its proper Place and Order: Eph. ii. 21. *In and by whom all the Building fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy Temple in the Lord:* There is to be Beauty in the whole House; for Jesus is a *Wise Master Builder*.

(3.) His

(3.) His strengthening and beautifying them when they are laid. He advances these Stones, contrary to what is found in other Building, to a farther size in Growth, and farther Beauty by polishing: As it is a living Temple, Virtue is communicated to all the Parts of it, whereby it grows to an *Holy Temple in the Lord*: This is the Work of Edification, not meerly bringing new Stones to the Building, but advancing and enlarging those that are there. Accordingly, we are told that there are *Bands, and Joints*, which are to administer Nourishment to this Building: there is the *Head*, the *chief Corner-Stone*, in whom all the Building fitly framed together, groweth unto an *Holy Temple in the Lord*, Eph. ii. 21. It's the Head that nourishes the Temple with divine Spiritual Encrease that it may be fit for the Habitation and Presence of God.

(4.) His perfecting and compleating this Temple: He is to nourish and edify it here, and at last to crown it with Perfection and Glory. The Temple, as to its outward Part, the whole Building of the Church here must be taken down; but this great *Architect* will raise it up like the Temple of his own Body, in Lustre and Glory: then shall the Stones be united, and all the parts of this Temple be set in their proper Order: then shall he bring forth the Head-Stone thereof with shouting, crying *Grace, Grace unto it*: and, being thus compleat, then comes the great *Shechinah*,

SERM. the everlasting Glory of the eternal God, and

VII. takes Possession of it to dwell therein for ever-
 more: there shall be no more Curse in the Tem-
 ple above, nothing but Blessings; for the *Throne*
of God and of the Lamb shall be in it: there, in
 that Holy Place is the true *Mercy Seat*, and *there*
shall his Servants serve Him: there will the blef-
 sed God dwell with his Saints for ever, and
 shine upon 'em in amiable Glory and Majesty:
 there will the Saints also love and adore the
 Blessed God, and be perfectly conform'd to his
 Will. That Service will be worthy the Name
 of Service, and the Rewards and Joys of that
 Place adequate to it.

Thus must the Lord Jesus build up the Tem-
 ple of his Father: He must bear and wear the
 Glory of all the Work; and sit and rule upon
 his Throne for ever and ever: Thus the Coun-
 sel of Peace will be accomplish'd and compleat-
 ed.

It further deserves our Notice here that Je-
 sus is a Servant, as He is the Prophet and A-
 postle of his Church: One that fulfill'd the
 Law, and is the Head of all the Prophets. *A*
Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto
you, Acts iii. 22. I will put my Words in his
Mouth, and he shall speak all that I shall com-
mand Him, Deut. xviii. 18. I will furnish him
with Matter, and he shall speak all my Coun-
sel He is also the *Apostle* of the New Testa-
 ment, yea, the Head of the Apostles: They
 are *Foundations*; but he is the *chief Corner-*
Stone,

Stone, Eph. ii. 20. *consider the Apostle and High* SERM.
Priest of your Profession, Jesus Christ, Heb. iii. 1. VII.

He is the Apostle to the Church, as the twelve
were to Him: *As my Father hath sent me,*
even so send I you. John xx. 21.

In his *Royal Office* He is also his Fathers Ser-
vant: He rules, prescribes, and governs for
God: He is anointed by the Father; and in
this Respect He is his King to govern and defend
us: He is call'd his Fathers *Shepherd*, and the
Bishop of Souls: He feeds his Church by his
Fathers Appointment; guides, governs, and de-
fends it; and carefully inspects the whole *Flock*:
Other Sheep I have, for whom I lay down my Life,
and them also must I bring in: this Commandment
have I receiv'd of my Father, John x. 16, 17, 18.

I wou'd close this Head with a Practical Re-
flection or two,

(1.) Let this banish all hard and terrifying
Thoughts of the Father from our Minds. Here
is nothing done in the whole Work of the Sin-
ners Redemption, but by the Fathers Appoint-
ment: Don't then look upon him, as an im-
placable Being that will not be reconciled:
the Father and the Spirit are concurring in all
that the Saviour does for our Relief; and in-
deed the Son does concur with the Father in
demanding an honourable Compensation for
the Sins of Mankind, that is, the Glory of en-
tire Deity does require it: The Son, thy Sa-
viour is as jealous for the Honour of the God-
head as the Father; and the Father is as willing

SERM. of the Recovery of thy Soul as the Son; yet

VII. the Son in all he did is the Fathers Servant;

it's from the Father the Son came into the World with a Message of Grace, and it was by his Appointment that he offer'd up himself a Sacrifice to satisfy divine Justice: The Light of a single Soul comes from the Father of Lights; tho' it comes by Jesus who is the *Light of the World*: It was by the Fathers order that He took our Nature, obey'd, and suffer'd, and made Himself a Sacrifice: What room then can you have to Doubt of his Readiness to bestow Mercy upon you? *All things are of God*, says the Apostle, (that is, the whole scheme of Man's Redemption) *who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ*, 2 Cor. v. 18.

(2.) What an Honour is put upon Us, who are call'd into the honourable Relation of the Servants of God, and not only so, but to be his Sons? We are call'd to be Fellow-Servants with the Lord Jesus, (though not for the same Purposes,) and to bear the Name and Title of Servants: and we are also called, as Sons, to be *Heirs of God and Joint-heirs of Christ of the same Glory with Him*, Rom. viii. 17. Our Lord seems to have a special Reference and Design to this, when He says, *Go to my Brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God*, John xx. 17.

(3.) From hence we may learn how great our Obligations are to the Blessed Jesus, that He wou'd undertake such Service for our Sakes.

If we consider who, and what we were, we may well wonder at it: We were Rebels against the Sovereign Lord his Father, and unworthy of his Notice; not only condemn'd by the Law we had broken, but our Hearts were alienated from the Blessed God: We were without Inclination or Desire to return to Him, and our best Services, when brought back again to God, were worth nothing.

If we consider the Saviour himself, the Obligation appears to be exceeding great: He was the Son of the *Highest*, delighting in his *Fathers Bosom*, and triumphing in his Love amidst all the Glories of the upper World; and yet He wou'd take Notice of us and our miserable Estate, and, which is much more, wou'd undertake the most expensive Service for Us: How low did He stoop? What bitter Things did He endure, both from Men and from Devils for our Sake? Blessed be God for Jesus Christ.

[*This Sermon may be divided here.*]

III. Let us enquire in the next Place, how He came to be such a Servant: He, who was the Brightness of his *Fathers Glory*, and the express Image of his Person: It cou'd only be these two Ways,

(1.) By his own voluntary Condescension. He must stoop to his Work, and humble himself to the difficult Undertaking; and in Order

SERM. der to that *He made himself of no Reputation;*

VII. He who was in the highest Honour and Glory in the Heavenly State, stoop'd down into this World: He wou'd be something else as well as God: *the Word was made Flesh*; the Creator became a Creature, and took our Nature into intimate Union with himself: What amazing Condescension is here? If the highest Angel shou'd stoop to the most inferiour State of Creation, a Worm, or an Atom; We might trace Him through all the steps of his Descent; but to trace the Son of God into human Nature, infinitely exceeds our utmost Comprehension and Thought.

(2.) Hereupon he took upon him the *form of a Servant*. He assumed and wore a Servants Livery, the Nature and garb of a Servant: He cou'd not do Service but in a form that was suitable thereunto: He therefore took a created Nature, that he might do the Creature Service; or rather, a human Nature, that he might do human Service: Angels are in the form of Servants, and so are Men; each created form is the form of a Servant, under Law and Government; and each have Service due from them to God; but the Lord Jesus put on that form which was most suitable to the Nature of Man: *Verily, He took not on him the Nature of Angels; but He took on him the seed of Abraham*, Heb. ii 16. But again,

IV. Let us further enquire why he wou'd be such a Servant. He that was the Son of God,

God,

God, and the Heir of all Things, and had by Inheritance obtain'd a *more excellent Name* than all the Angels; why wou'd *He* become a Servant? especially, why wou'd such a one become a Servant, when He knew his Service wou'd cost him so dear? I might answer, who can tell? Who has been *his Counsellour*, or can give a sufficient Reason? Nay, what Reason can be imagined, but that He might have wav'd this Service if He had pleas'd? But this I suppose in general may be said,

SERM.
VII.

[I.] His Fathers Affairs required it. Those Affairs of his which lay in this World: It was determined the Divine Virtues and Perfections shou'd shine, or rather shine again, in such a Way as was suitable to a ruin'd World; and that a Revenue of Glory shou'd be rais'd out of it: though the Perfections of God that shone in the first Creation seem'd as it were sullied; yet God determined He wou'd have 'em shine again, and shine brighter than they did before.

(1.) The Wisdom of God shone before, and it must shine again. Wisdom shone in making Man; in ordaining and governing such a Creature as Man; in uniting Soul and Body together, so that the Body shou'd have some Influence upon the Spirit, and the Spirit some Command upon the Body: Now, Wisdom shall shine again in redeeming, restoring and reconciling this Creature; in restoring Him to the Image and Favour of God; in redeeming Him from under the Curse of the Law, and putting Him

SERM. Him under a Blessing; and in reconciling his
 VII. Heart to God, from whom it was become alien-
 ated: He will advance him to a Joy as great
 or perhaps greater than if he had never fallen:
*Herein has God abounded towards us in all Wis-
 dom and Prudence, Eph. i. 8.*

(2.) Righteousness which shone before, must
 shine again. Righteousness shone in making
 Man Righteous, after the Image of God; in
 giving Him a righteous Law, and in guiding
 and governing him according to that Law: this
 Righteousness seems to be in a great Measure
 lost out of the World by the Fall; but the Son
 himself will now become obedient to God:
 Righteousness shines in providing a Righteous-
 ness through the Redeemer for them who have
 none of their own: *This is the Gift of Righte-
 ousness, as the Apostle expresses it, whereby
 lapsed Souls shall reign in Life through Jesus
 Christ. Rom. v. 17.*

(3.) Whereas Power did shine before, Power
 must shine again. The Power of God shone
 in forming such a Creature as Man out of the
 Dust of the Earth, and in animating this Dust
 with a reasonable immortal Spirit: Now, the
 Power of God shall appear in recovering this
 Spirit from a Slavery to Satan whereby it was
 bound, and in restoring it to Holiness when it
 was corrupted. Particularly, the Power of God
 will appear in the Person and Transactions of
 this glorious Servant: The divine Power was
 to shine again in the Production of the Man
 Christ

Christ Jesus, in all the steps of his Walk, in SERM.
all the Agonies of his Death, in his Resurrec- VII.
tion from the Dead, in his Ascension to Hea-
ven, and in the Administration of his King-
dom and Government in the World.

(4.) Goodness shone before in the Creation of Man, and now Goodness and Love shall triumph with great Advantage, and more gloriously than ever. It appear'd to Man before in the Excellence of his Nature above other Creatures, in kindly providing for his Support and Happiness here on Earth, and in promising him a glorious Reward hereafter: But now Goodness appears in the most endearing Names: Compassion, Grace, and Bowels of Mercy yearning over lost and perishing Creatures. Mercy is the good Will of God towards them that are in Misery, Grace in it's highest Beauty and Glory; its unmeasurable, free, and unsearchable Grace; the Riches of Grace in Christ Jesus: How great good Will was that, which gave the Son to be a Servant, a suffering Servant for us, and through him gives us Pardon, Grace, and Glory? *God is Love*, says the Apostle, or all over Love, as if he were nothing else but Love. 1 John iv. 8.

Thus the Fathers Affairs required such a Servant as this.

[2.] It may be said the Fathers off-spring needed such a Servant. An off-spring not so glorious as He, nor worthy to be compared with Him; yet such as the Father wou'd not entirely neglect;

SERM. neglect. *We are*, says the Apostle, the off-spring
 VII. of God, Acts xvii. 28. made in the Image of
 God, fitted for divine Life, Immortality, Joy
 and Glory. We have indeed fallen from our
 Crown and Blessedness: We needed a Deliver-
 er that we might enjoy our God again: We
 needed a Ransom to deliver us from Death and
 Hell, and restore us to our native Seats: And
 the Lord Jesus Christ wou'd become this great
 Deliverer: When we wanted one to repair the
 Ruins of our Nature, He saw our Wants, and
 came down from Heaven to do us this Service:
He was gracious to us, and said, "*I will deliver
 them from going down into the Pit, the Pit of
 hellish Destruction; I will provide them a Ran-
 som:*" We wanted a Happiness in God, and
 this he purchased by laying down his Life for
 Us.

[3.] May it not be said, He was pleased to
 have Regard to the Wages proposed. Not that
 He needed the Wages; for what Blessedness
 can be added to him who is the Brightness of
 his Father's Glory? It must be Love and Zeal
 for his Father, free Goodness and Compassion
 to us, that invites Him to have any Respect to
 the Work or Wages: But nevertheless it should
 seem to have been partly upon this account
 that he undertook this Service, tho' he did it
 freely: And indeed it was very meet that,
 when the Son became a Servant, He shou'd
 have some glorious Honour put upon Him;
 such Rewards as such a Servant is capable of,
 and

and wou'd be suitable for such a Master or Lord, as his Father, to bestow; such as shou'd be to his *Satisfaction*; and accordingly it was promised, *He shall see of the Travel of his Soul and be satisfied*, Isa. liii. 11. He shall be pleased with the Event and Issue of his mediatorial Service; be satisfied with the Advancement of his Person to sit down with the Father on his Throne: He was to rest from his Service, or acquiesce in it as a thing well done; and, having ceased from his Work as God did from his, that is, having finish'd the Work of Redemption here below, He is now enter'd into Rest, that is, into Heaven: He had Respect to the *Joy that was set before Him*, or he wrought and suffer'd for this, discharg'd all the Service his Father gave him to do upon the Account of it: Well might the Father bring him forth under this peculiar Character, *Behold, my Servant whom I have Chosen*. Which leads us to consider in the next Place

V. What Regards are to be paid Him: Behold my Servant whom I have Chosen: Behold him, turn all your Thoughts this Way: There never was such an Object, so glorious and deserving of your Attention; whether you consider the Servant himself, who He is; the Service He is to do; how He does it; for whom He does it; and what it will come to in the End: He is in a much higher and nobler Sense God's Servant than any others are. This
is a

SERM. is a Work in which He stands alone ; the Difficulty and Honour of it are too great for any

VII.

 Creature: You, the Sons of *Adam*, are under peculiar Obligations to behold him: it's your Duty and Interest to do it. In speaking to this Head I shall endeavour to shew, *first*, in what Point of Light we are to behold this Servant, *and then*, what Effects our beholding him in this Light shou'd have upon Us.

[1.] I wou'd shew in what Point of Light we are to consider this Servant, *Behold, my Servant, &c.*

(1.) Behold Him in his Entrance upon his Work. See him stooping from the Throne of the highest to be born of a Virgin poor and despised: Him whom Angels adored and celebrated in their Songs above, stript and destitute of the common Respects that are paid to the lower Parts of Mankind: See Him brought forth in a Stable at an Inn, and laid in a Manger, as if fit only to herd with Brutes; See Him a poor helpless Infant, growing up under the Tuition, maintain'd by the Care, and govern'd by the Hands of his Parents: Behold Him obscure in a mean Retirement, affecting no shew, little noticed in the World where He was, and perhaps even labouring in a very mean Employment: Behold Him baptized and careful to fulfill all Righteousness: receiving his Commission from Heaven, and ordering Men to attend his Message; Behold Him driven by the Spirit into the Wilderness, and assaulted

assaulted with Violence, by the Devil after He had fasted forty Days and forty Nights. SERM.
VII.

And yet, whilst you behold Him entering upon his Work, you may see a number of divine Glories break through this dark Cloud: His Mother was saluted by an Angel who brought the Tidings of this great Honour that was to be put upon Her: She was afterwards saluted of her Cousin *Elizabeth* by a wonderful prophetick Impulse of the Divine Spirit: Angels sung his Birth, the Wise-men from afar attended to do Him Homage, and brought their Offerings to Him: A Divine Power guards Him from the Cruelties of the Wicked, and Angels are sent with Messages to instruct his Parents: A Voice from Heaven proclaims Him the Son of God, and the Sons of Men are bid to attend upon Him: He is pronounced peculiarly dear to Heaven, and on this Account is recommended to our Observation and Esteem.

(2.) Behold Him in the Discharge of his Work. Particularly, in his Humiliation: Behold his Zeal for God as soon as He appears, and begins to act openly in the World: with what Care and Exactness He performs his Fathers Will, delivers his Fathers Message, and keeps close to the Words his Father sent Him with: Observe with what sacred Zeal and Vehemence He does this: " 'Tis my Meat and Drink, says He, to do the Will of Him that sent me, and to finish his Work," John iv. 34. He went about doing good; was unwearied in his Labour

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to revive the Knowledge of God, shed the favour of Divine Grace, and bring Sinners to Repentance: Behold with what Tenderness and Compassion He treats 'em: See with what Meekness He endures the Contradiction, the Blasphemy, and spight of the Wicked: and with what Patience he endures the Dullness and Weakness of his well disposed Disciples: Behold with what Contempt he treats this World, (He wou'd not have so much as a Place where to lay his Head) and with what Warmth and Earnestness he pursues his Work: follow Him into his Retirements and there behold Him praying all Night unto God, rejecting his Friends Advice to spare himself: behold Him affecting Retirement and making no Ostentation. Behold Him in the Garden where he was to undergo the bloody Conflict; how He sweat, how He groan'd, with what Strength and Fervour He cry'd, what sorrows He felt, and with what Submission He resign'd himself to his Fathers Will; with what Meekness He yields himself a Prisoner, suffers the rude Insults of the Wicked, and the Powers of Earth and Hell combined against Him.

Oh! what Conflicts did He undergo for Sin in this Hour and Power of Darkness? Behold how He was torn with cruel Scourgings; how He was reproach'd and nail'd to the cursed Tree, having his sacred Head wounded with Thorns, and crying out, under the withdrawings of his Fathers Face, *My God, my God, why hast*

hast thou forsaken me: Behold the Son of God SERM.
resigning himself as a Malefactor, though he VII.
was the *just and holy One*: See the Just offer'd
for the Unjust, crucified for you and me,
and sacrificed to his Fathers Justice that we
might be saved by his Grace. Behold the Earth
quaking, the Rocks rending, and all Nature
agonizing when Jesus was finishing his Work,
as though all things were dissolving.

(3.) Behold him in the Rewards of his Service. Raised from the Dead, giving forth a Commission to the Apostles to preach the Gospel and Remission of Sins in his Name to all Nations, and then ascending up on high with shouts of Glory: Behold Him enthroned in the highest Glory next to pure Deity: Behold Him supreme in his Fathers Love, and all Power given Him both in Heaven and in Earth, with a Name above every Name, and all the holy Angels worshipping before Him: Behold Him with Sovereign Authority giving Laws to all the World, and Head over all things to his Church: honour'd to be the Mediator between God and Man by constant Intercession; bringing all the Offerings of the Thousands and ten Thousands of his Saints before God with Acceptance, and receiving Blessings from Him to bestow upon them: Behold a Seed serving Him, and approaching to the great and holy God through Him; an Intercourse carried on between Heaven and Earth, between God and Souls through the great Mediator on high.

SERM. (4.) Behold Him in the Fruit and Success of
VII. his Service. What Multitudes by his Grace

are overcome and brought to obey Him; and with what entire Confidence the Saints trust Him with all their Interests both for Time and Eternity, renouncing all former Lusts and Lovers, and subjecting themselves to his Government and Glory: Behold with what fervent Zeal they honour and adore Him, what Multitudes they are, and how the favour of his Name and Gospel has, like Ointment poured forth, diffused itself into all Parts of the World; those who were not his People, now becoming his People; and the Gentiles who were without God, now obtaining Mercy: Behold how they who were dead in Trespases and Sins are made to leave and renounce the Devils Slavery, and become the Servants of God, endued with his Spirit, made like unto Him, and Lovers of Holiness: Behold Faith and Love, Spirituality and Heavenly-mindedness reigning in those Hearts where there was nothing but Filth before: Behold this Divine Principle propagated by his Influence from one Generation to another, and kept alive in spite of all that Hell can do: Though particular Saints who have receiv'd this Privilege are dying one after another; yet the Principle does not die with them: It descends from one Generation to another, and by Virtue of it Souls are brought to Glory: They vanquish Death and Hell, and pass safe through the Grave to the Regions of Life

Life and Blessedness: Behold how the *Pleasure* SERM.
of the Lord prospers in the Hands of the Re- VII.
deemer; how many Sons He *has* brought to
Glory, and He *will* bring more.

(5.) Behold Him in the finishing and Consummation of his Service. Behold Him by Faith descending gloriously from the Throne of his Father, cloath'd with the Character of universal Judge, with full Power to hear and decide all Causes: Behold Him attended with ten Thousands of his Saints, and with his Angels in flaming Fire, riding upon a Cloud, and enthroned there, and all adoring: the Tribes of the Earth convened before his Tribunal, and waiting a Sentence from his Mouth: Behold him deciding every Cause with impartial Justice, and yet with glorious Displays of Grace; driving away some with terrible Vengeance, and receiving others with the most surprizing Condescension and Love: Behold Him thus winding up all, when He has no more to do, namely, delivering up the Kingdom to his Father, both the Subjects of the Kingdom, and the Administration of it, that *God may be all in all.*

I proceed to consider

[2.] What Effects our beholding Christ in this Light shou'd have upon us. *Behold my Servant, &c.*

SERM. (1.) Behold him that you may know him

VII. and be acquainted with him. He wou'd be
 known by all Men: *I said behold me, behold me, to a Nation that was not called by my Name, Isa. lxxv. 1.* It is for *his* Honour to be known; and it's *your* Interest to know him, *John xvii. 3.* Fix the Eyes of your Minds upon him, and study to apprehend more of him; more of his Humiliation, Love, and Grace; more of his Obedience and Miracles, of his Doctrine, Death and Resurrection; and of the Relation he stands in to you; more of his Person and Offices, and their suitableness to your Case; that you may better understand what he does with God for you, and with you for God. Behold Him that you may know him when He comes again; (for then every Eye shall see him) that you may then see him in Peace, see him your Friend, and be able to *lift up your Heads with Joy because your Redemption draws nigh.*

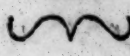
(2.) Behold and admire him. They that behold him, and know what they see, cannot help admiring him: Admire that such a one as He shou'd become a Servant; and admire him in the Service He perform'd; that He did it so punctually, so diligently, and wou'd not leave it off till He cou'd say it was *finish'd*: Admire him in the Manger, upon the Cross, and now He is seated upon his Father's Throne, where He still continues his Service, *opens the Books, and looses the Seals, and ever lives to make Inter-*

Intercession: We are told that the *living Creatures*, and *four and twenty Elders* fall down and adore Him, *Rev. v. 6.* Do you behold and admire the Wonders that He does, and let your Souls be filled with Astonishment at all his glorious Performances. SERM. VII.

(3.) Behold him, and believe and trust in Him. When you see what He has been and done, surely, you can have no Suspicion of Him: there is not the least Room for one jealous doubting Thought. Confirm your selves in this; that He is the Son of God and Saviour of the World, and yield up your selves to be ruled, and taught, and saved by Him; to have your Minds heal'd of Darknes, and your Sins attoned for; that you may be made righteous in the Sight of a holy God, and have your Services become acceptable to Him through Jesus Christ: Behold him that you may trust him for the keeping up an Interest in Heaven for you: Put your selves into his Hands with entire Confidence and Satisfaction, that he may do the whole Work of a Saviour upon you, without doubting his Ability or Willingness: He will be faithful to the Trust you repose in him, and in humble Dependance upon his Merit and Grace, you may expect entire Salvation from Him.

(4) Behold him and apply to him for his Service. Have you no Work for him to do?

SERM. Do you need none of the Service he came to perform? Have you no dark distemper'd Eyes;

VII.  no paralytick Hands? Have you no harden'd Hearts for him to soften? No broken Bones for him to set? O, look to him for Life, for Righteousness, for Healing, for Peace, and Joy, and Strength, and Conduct to everlasting Life and Glory.

(5.) Behold him, and imitate him. O, how shou'd his Example shame you out of Sin into Obedience? Will not you serve God when you have such a Fellow-Servant? O, *let the same Mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus*, Phil. ii. 5.

(6.) Behold him and rejoice in him. Can you forbear rejoicing in him, while you observe him furnish'd with every saving Excellence, and appointed by the Father to do all this Service for you? shou'd not you rejoice, the very *Stones wou'd cry out*: you are commanded to *rejoice in Christ Jesus*, and may well rejoice in Him: He is not come to execute an angry Commission from an offended God: The whole of his Undertaking has the kindest Aspect upon the Sons of Men. *Glory to God in the highest, Peace on Earth, and good Will towards Men*, are strains in which Angels sung the Design of his coming: *God sent not his Son to condemn the World; but that the World through him might be saved*, John iii. 17. He is well furnish'd for saving Work, having an offering to make of infinite Value, and is able to *save to the uttermost*

most all that come unto God by Him: His Blood SERM.
cleanses from all Sin, and all that He does is some VII.
Way or other Subservient to the great De-
sign of delivering Souls: By Him we have
Access to God, more satisfying Methods of Wor-
ship, and Foundations of Hope, together with
a clearer Certainty of a glorious Reward; and
all this is confirm'd by exceeding great and pre-
cious Promises.

(7.) Behold Him with great Thankfulness to
God. O, Bless God that He has chosen *such*
a Servant, and *such* Work for Him to do:
Bless his Name that He has appointed such a
Servant to work out Salvation for you: What
wonderous Love and Goodness is it, that He
shou'd reckon your Redemption a Service done
to Him? O, Let the high Praises of God be
often on your Tongues; and while your Hearts
glow with Love and Gratitude, be often say-
ing, Thanks be to God for Jesus Christ. I wou'd
shut up all with a brief Application: And if
Jesus Christ be the Fathers Servant, then

(1.) How high and glorious is the Father,
who has such a Servant as this? He must be
the *high and lofty One*, to be sure, to whom the
Heir of all Things is a Servant.

(2.) How condescending and good is the eter-
nal Son, who wou'd become such a Servant?
Here is a wonder for Angels themselves: This
is the *Mystery they look into*; and it may well
be proposed as a *Mystery of Godliness without*
all

SERM. *all Controversy, that God was manifested in the*
 VII. *Flesh.*

~~~~~ (3.) You may be assured from hence that Christ is no Minister of Sin. He is the Servant of the *holy God*, his *prime Minister* of State, and can never serve the Purposes of Sin.

(4.) Wo to those that oppose Him in his Service. He is the eternal Servant of the eternal God; ordain'd to build his Temple, to gather his Elect, to rear up his Kingdom and Glory in the World; and Wo to those that oppose Him therein. Will not the Father espouse his Cause, and uphold Him in his Service? He will, and make the World, yea, and Hell to know it too.

(5.) and Lastly, If Christ be the Fathers Servant then sure, we shou'd not be averse to serve one another. Shall we who have had such Service done for Us, refuse any Service we are capable of, either to God, or to our Fellow-Men who want our Assistance? If God has loved Us, we shou'd love one another, and shew it by all the Methods of Compassion, Advice, Tenderness, and real Substantial Assistance: Certainly, this is but reasonable: It's what God expects, what He takes well, and will be sure to reward: If God has sent his Son to minister to the Saints, we shou'd not think much to minister to them also: *Blessed are the Merciful; for they shall obtain Mercy*, Mat. v. 7. 'Tis certain, we all want this Mercy at the Hands of God, and if we have it not are undone: And can we with any  
 Con-

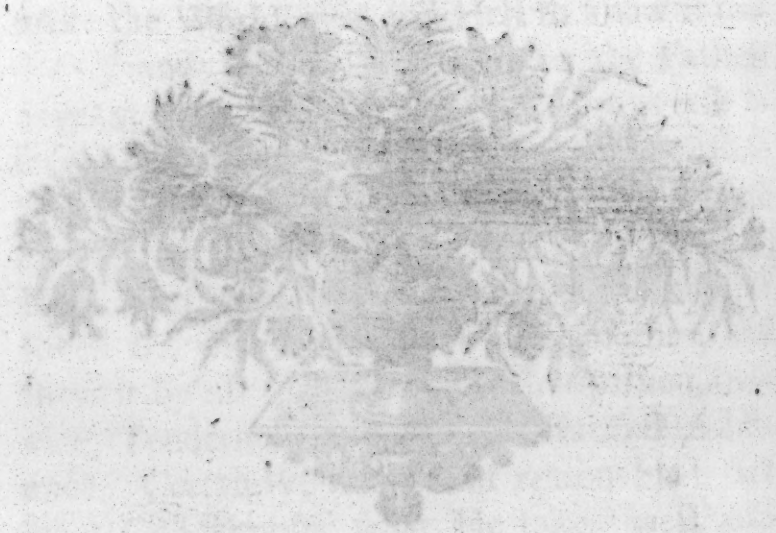


Confidence look up to Him for it while we refuse to use that little of it we have towards our Fellow Men? Let this weigh with you, who have so many Objects of Pity and Compassion before your Eyes: This is the Way both to lighten their Burden, and to derive a Blessing upon the Bounties of Providence towards your selves,

SERM.  
VII.



Consider how up to him for it while we are  
told to use that little of it we have towards  
our Fellow Men. For this weight with you  
who have so many Objects of Pity and Com-  
passion before your Eyes: This is the Way  
both to Righten their Bodies, and to deserve a  
blessing upon the Bounties of Providence to-  
wards your selves. We have a great deal of  
money in the world, and it is all laid out  
in the service of the world, and not in the  
service of the poor. We have a great deal of  
money in the world, and it is all laid out  
in the service of the world, and not in the  
service of the poor.





# SERMON VIII.

GOD the SHEPHERD, or Restorer of his  
PEOPLE.

PSALM XXIII. 3.

*He restoreth my Soul: He leadeth Me in the  
Paths of Righteousness for his Names Sake.*

**T**HIS excellent *Psalms* has always been SERM.  
VIII.  
of great Account with the People of  
God, and always will be so; it contributes  
extremely to their Satisfaction while they are  
in this Wilderness State: They delight in view-  
ing and reviewing the divine Contents of it,  
and there are a great many valuable Things that  
may justly make it much their Delight. Par-  
ticularly, here is the Relation that the great God,  
the God of Heaven is pleased to assume towards  
his People; (and the Psalmist enlarges upon  
this reviving Thought :) He is their Shepherd;  
they are his Flock; each of his Saints are taken  
into his particular Care, and under his In-  
spection;



SERM. spection; and their Advantages hereby are

VIII. exceeding great; some of which they possess  
 now, others of 'em are in Reversion; as first,  
 'tis their Comfort that they are provided for:  
*The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not Want*; that  
 which is sufficient and useful shall always be  
 afforded them: Nay, what is pleasant too; *He*  
*makes me to lie down in green Pastures, and leads*  
*me beside the still Waters*: They have this Com-  
 fort also, that in Case of wandering they shall  
 be reduced, and then secured by future Conduct;  
 that they shall have, not only a Competency,  
 but Plenty, notwithstanding all the Oppositi-  
 on of their Enemies: but then; there are o-  
 ther greater and more valuable Things behind  
 which they live in the comfortable Expectati-  
 on of: They may depend upon it that it shall  
 be well with 'em, that *Goodness and Mercy*  
*shall follow 'em all the Days of their Lives*: They  
 have not only Hope in Life, but this Comfort  
 in Death, that all the Terrours of it shall not  
 extinguish their Hopes; but rather bring 'em  
 to the Enjoyment of them: their Shepherd will  
 then act his Part towards 'em with the most  
 consummate Skill and perfect Faithfulness.  
 The Upshot of all is, *I shall dwell in the House*  
*of the Lord for ever*: This will be the happy  
 Issue of such a Relation to the Blessed God.

In the Text there are two Parts of personal  
 Conduct, which the Psalmist takes as a great  
 Privilege.

I. That

I. That He shou'd be brought into the Way when He had strayed from it: *He restoreth my Soul.*

II That He shou'd be help'd forward in the future Course of his Duty: *He leadeth me in the Paths of Righteousness for his Names Sake.*

I shall confine my Thoughts at present to the former of these: Namely the divine Conduct in bringing his People back again when they have stray'd from the Ways of God. I shall speak to this under several Propositions; and wou'd observe,

I. That the Restoration here spoken of is a spiritual One: principally so, I mean, not exclusive of temporal Mercies, Assistances, and Supports which the People of God stand in need of in the present World. 'Tis plain, the Psalmist has a more direct Reference to something Spiritual from the Words immediately following. God does often answer the Desires of his People and restore their Souls with Respect to their present and outward Circumstances, and they have more Reason to expect and Hope for these Mercies from Him then Others have, provided they be for *his* Glory and their *own* Good. He heals their Sickneses, and so He restores *their* Souls that were just leaving this Body and this World: But it's principally to be understood

SERM. derstood of their spiritual Restoration; which  
 VIII. signifies that there had been a wandering from the  
 way God had directed them to, and mark'd out  
 for 'em; it implies also that God gives 'em a  
 Conviction of their Errour, and Repentance for  
 it; He shews them that they have done what  
 shou'd have been carefully avoided, or that  
 they have not been careful to do what He  
 insisted upon as a Part of Homage they  
 owed Him; He makes them sensible that  
 herein they have injured *Him*, and wronged  
*their own* Souls: God's restoring them sig-  
 nifies his giving them Repentance, shewing  
 them the Evil of Sin, giving them a hearty  
 sorrow for it, a real and deep Aversion to it,  
 that they may fear it, and fly from it for the  
 time to come: *He restores their Souls*; He brings  
 them into the way of Duty again, gives them  
 holy Dispositions, and Strengthens them for  
 the Service He enjoins; He pardons their Ini-  
 quity, and accepts them into his Favour; and  
 sometimes He restores them to their Comfort  
 again, to a comfortable Sense of his Favour,  
 and gives them again to rejoice in the Lord as  
 their Strength,

II. This Restoration is to be understood of  
 his reducing a Soul that was before converted,  
 Of one who has been before brought off from  
 the Ways of Sin into the Ways of Holiness;  
 who has been sincerely devoted to God, and  
 hereupon stood in a special Relation to Him,



To restore the Soul is certainly to bring it in-  
to a Frame and Temper of Mind it once had,  
but is now fallen off from. There can be no  
such Restoration of a Soul that never was re-  
new'd by Grace. A Soul that never had a good  
Frame and Temper cannot be said to be re-  
stored to One. The Psalmist seems to speak of  
something that God had done *formerly* for his  
Soul: He restoreth my Soul: Something God  
had done for Him as his Shepherd, which can-  
not belong to the World of Mankind in gene-  
ral. Conversion does not *find*, but *make* us  
Sheep: Then this Relation betwixt God and  
Us commences: He is our Shepherd, and we  
the Sheep of his Pasture. But again,

III. The Souls of Gods People are too often  
found wandering, or under such Declensions as  
to need a Restoration. Foul Offences and sad  
Decays the best of Gods Saints here are inci-  
dent to: One wou'd indeed think it very  
strange for a renewed Soul to turn off from  
God, did we not find too many Instances of  
this sort in our Churches, did we not feel our  
own Hearts so apt to wander and fall: The  
Work that God does upon the Soul when he  
brings it Home to himself, is represented in  
Scripture as exceeding great: They are said to  
be *made Partakers of a Divine Nature*: He  
bestows his Image upon 'em, and gives 'em his  
Spirit to inhabit and lead 'em: They are said  
to be new Creatures, that is, the Views they  
have

SERM. have of Divine Things are very different from  
VIII. what they had before: Every faculty is in a

sort new moulded: They have a different Temper and Disposition from what they had before: Not only divine Light has enter'd into their Minds, but divine Love has taken Place in their Hearts: They have not only other Apprehensions now of God, and Christ, and Sin, and the Law of God, and the Gospel of Grace, and the future everlasting State they must e'er long enter upon; but they have different Affections about 'em: Their Minds have quite a different Turn from what they once had: They now embrace God, and Christ, and the Service of Religion as Good: They look upon themselves as deeply concern'd in those great and awful Things the Gospel sets before them: They like and choose and resolve upon what it proposes as Duty; and this Alteration is made throughout.

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2 leaves

IV. A declining Soul is not able to recover it self. *He restores my Soul:* It never was, or will be true of any Soul that turned aside from God, that it reduced it self. Sooner may a disjointed Bone replace it self. The Perseverance of the Saints in Grace, and the Recovery of a Soul from its Declensions are both the Work of God: The Psalmist here takes special Notice of it; *He restores my Soul:* if God only can keep his People *from* falling, He only can raise 'em when they are fallen:  
'Tis

'Tis much easier for Sin and Satan, the World SERM.  
and Flesh to *keep* the Soul down from God, VIII.  
than to *cast it down*: If God, as a good and  
tender Shepherd, don't seek and bring 'em  
back to the Fold they will never return: It's  
observ'd of Sheep, that they are the most easi-  
ly lost of any other Creature; the most apt to  
wander, and the most silly and unable to find  
the way back again. Cou'd the Psalmist have  
recover'd Himself, He wou'd rather have said,  
*be found of thy Servant*, than *seek thy Servant*.  
The Psalmist knew well enough, and so shou'd  
Christians too, that *They* will never seek *Him*  
more, if *He* don't seek *them* when they have  
declined. 'Tis not unlikely the Psalmist might  
here have his Eye to the Guilt He had con-  
tracted in the Matter of *Uriah* under which he  
continued for some time before He was restored.

V. The great God does and will restore his  
People. This Proposition lies fairly in the Text;  
as he alone *can*, so He *will* take Care of it, that  
it shall be done: He has promised it, and He  
*is faithful who bath promised*. In the xv. of *Luke*  
Christ himself is represented as the good *Shep-*  
*herd* that looks after his wandering Sheep: their  
Safety and Restoration depend upon his Faith-  
fulness and Care: but then, you must remem-  
ber God has not confined himself to one par-  
ticular Method of restoring his Saints: He uses  
a great Variety of Ways.



SERM. (1.) God does sometimes restore the Souls  
VIII. of his People very quickly, and sometimes a-

gain He lets 'em lie long in a declining Condition. Sometimes the Sin is no sooner committed, but the Offender is struck to the Heart with Conviction, and He has no Ease in Himself: He is like one that has a Bone out of Joint, till He return back again to his God: The Wound sinarts so that He has no Ease, and He immediately falls down before God, makes Confession, and begs Pardon. And this deserves our Observation in the Case, that the Recovery of a Soul is ordinarily quick and speedy, when the Fall has been very sudden, or when we have through the Violence of a Temptation been pusht into a Sin we had no suspicion of just before.

But when the Temptation has gradually advanced upon Us; when we have been minded and reminded of it; have had Time to consider and view it; or when we have gone into the Crime deliberately: 'tis then ordinarily that the Soul is struck with it: and the Recovery of such a One is commonly more slow, and less sensible: it usually costs Him more Pains and Cries and Tears, more Terrour and Anguish of Mind before He is reduced and set right, which seems to have been the Psalmists Case here.

(2.) Sometimes He does it with all Gentleness: with the kindest Perswasions He melts their Hearts into tender Relenting for Sin: They

They are ashamed and blush that so good and gracious a God has been so ill requited: He says unto 'em, *return ye backsliding Children, and I will heal your Backslidings, I will love you freely*: This manner of Address insinuates it self into the Soul in the most agreeable, and yet in the most strong and forcible Manner.

But then, He takes another Course with others: Sometimes He does as it were put them upon the Rack, and break one Bone after another, till they cry out and roar of their broken Bones, alluding to *Psal. li 8, 17*. Conscience is in an Alarm, and all the Powers of the Soul are in an Uproar: the Man has no Peace; He has all Rack and Torture: He's within sight of the hideous yawning Gulph; and the *Terrors of the divine Majesty are all set in Array against Him*. Thus He is restored.

(3.) Sometimes He does it manifestly that others may see their Recovery. This must suppose that his Peoples Declensions have been of long standing, and have appear'd in their Lives and Conversations. Some good Men, I mean those whom we must in Charity believe to be sincere and upright, have, either through too great Prosperity in the World, or through a Multiplicity of Cares and Business in Life manifestly declined and lost their first Love. Now, God sometimes recovers these manifestly: He meets with 'em by such Rebukes of Providence as make 'em see the Vanity of the World, and the Emptiness of all Enjoyments here be-

SERM. low; and by this Means He quickens 'em to  
 VIII. more diligence in Duty: This is many Times  
 visible in the Eyes of the World.

But then sometimes their Recovery is in a great Measure indiscernable; or it does not appear till the very last: When there is nothing particular or extraordinary in their outward Circumstances, then it is ordinarily less discern'd by others; and when the Work of Recovery is carry'd on gradually in the Soul by the Spirit of God, 'tis oftentimes less discern'd by themselves. They don't soon recover that comfortable Communion with God that once they had: But, since they belong to God, He will sooner or later restore their Souls.

VI. God restores his People in a Pastoral way. 'Tis as their Shepherd that He restores 'em: and here it may be proper to enquire into the Means whereby God restores them:

(1.) He restores 'em sometimes by Means of his Under-Shepherds, his Ministers whom He employs in the Church for this End. They are call'd and appointed to lay sacred Truths before the Flock, to urge these upon the Conscience by the Promises and Threatenings of the Gospel: and here Souls are sometimes met withall; the Spirit conveys the Word to the Heart, and fixes it there, and makes the Sinner say, "I am the Man, 'tis my Case that" is here pointed out: "and with the Conviction, there is oftentimes a mighty Power of  
 Grace



over life

Grace to change and reform the Temper of the SERM. Mind. Thus God sometimes works by his Mi- VIII. nisters his Under-Shepherds: O, that we cou'd find it was oftener done among you.

(2.) Sometimes God restores his People by Means of some of the Flock, the Communion of Saints. As one that is amiss endangers the Infection of the rest, so One that is fallen may be, and sometimes is brought back by the rest, *Heb. xii. 12, 13.* Conversation with those that are serious very often Shames the declining Soul, and brings it back again to its God. Sometimes, when He comes to the Knowledge of those Comforts which the Saints have in Religion, and which He himself used to experience, He regrets the loss of it; and is stung with self Reproach, whilst He considers what others enjoy. He sees the Evenness of the Walk of Gods People, and the Exemplariness of their Conversation: He sees the supports they have under Afflictions and Disappointments, and from hence He receives some Conviction that the Matters is not with Himself as it is with them: Many who have been in a declining State, have kept close to the People of God, preserv'd Communion with them, and have thus been restored.

(3.) God restores the Souls of his People by Means of his Ordinances By these God calls after his backsliding Children, as the Shepherd after his Sheep, that is separated from the rest to bring it back again, As,

O 4

(1.) Hear-

SERM.

VIII.

(1.) Hearing the Word preach'd is a Means of Recovery. Hereby the Sinner is call'd upon, commanded and directed what to do under a State of Declension; and has many Promises and Threatenings propos'd to excite and quicken Him to return.

(2.) Prayer is another of those Methods whereby God restores the declining Souls of his People. When the Soul, that has lost its first Love, comes to bow before his Footstool, and finds that awful Sense of God wanting which it used to have; those tender Relentings for Sin all gone, and those sacred Warmths of Soul which it used to have all lost; it is ashamed of it self, that it cannot feel as it used to feel: it presently apprehends that there is Sin in the Case, and is very fearful lest it grow worse and worse: This fills it with Sollicitude how the Case may be alter'd, how that Temper of Mind may be gain'd again which it once had: Whilst it asks for Blessings, and feels not hungering and thirsting after Righteousness which it was wont to have, it is uneasy in it self, and in Pain, till it find the sacred Appetite return.

(3.) The Ordinance of the Lord's Supper is a Means of restoring the Soul. 'Tis here, the most desirable Advantages are often got by the Saints: They are quicken'd under their Dullness, and strengthen'd under their Weakness: Here their Doubts are satisfied; their Strength is renew'd, the Convictions of Sin are set Home upon the Conscience, and Convictions of Divine

vine Love set in the strongest and most penetrating Light: Here they see that which affects 'em much, and that which directs and encourages them: They go away rejoicing from this Ordinance very often when they have gone drooping and dejected to it. SERM. VIII.

VII. God restores the Souls of his People for his own *Names Sake*: For

(1.) A converted Soul can no more merit this Restoration, then at first when it was unconverted. It *must* therefore be for Gods own *Names Sake*: *As many as received Him, to them gave He Power to become the Sons of God, even to them that believe on his Name*, John i. 12. As He gives the first Grace to Sinners, so He must restore their Souls after they are converted. Psal. cxxx. 3. *If thou, Lord, shou'dst mark Iniquity, O Lord, who shou'd stand?* that is, if He deal with us as we deserve, we shall stand no more in Grace, and then certainly we shall not stand in Judgment: a declining Soul don't deserve restoring Grace.

(2.) Though it is not due to 'em on their own Account, yet it is due to the Honour of Gods *Name*. This is very much concern'd in the Restoration of a declining Soul: if not how cou'd it be said that God did it for his *Names Sake*. Now, we may be satisfied that God will do it for his *Names Sake* if we consider what this implies, As,

(1) We may understand hereby the Name that He has taken upon Himself, I mean, of their



SERM. their *Shepherd*. He will do it for his Names

VIII. Sake: Certainly it is not for his Honour to assume a Character He never designs to Answer: He does not call Himself his People's Shepherd for Nothing: He who has cloath'd Himself with such a Character will be sure to discharge his Office: all that becomes his Relation shall be done for them: it's an Honour due to his Name, to make a Difference between those to whom He is a Shepherd, and those to whom He is not, by some peculiar Instances of Affection and Care. God complains of the Negligence of his Ministers by the Prophet *Ezekiel*: (chap. xxxiv.) And wou'd it not be absurd in Him to blame and censure those Shepherds that are negligent, and yet be so Himself?

(2.) By his Name possibly may be understood his Word and Promise. He has undertaken to lead his People through this World; to be their *Sun* to enlighten 'em, as well as their *Shield* to defend 'em: He hath said, *He will never leave 'em, nor forsake 'em*, Heb. xiii. 5. Which must imply that, though they wander from their Duty, He will reclaim 'em. Again,

(3.) Some have by the Name of God (and I wou'd not exclude that Sense of it) understood *the Lord Jesus Christ*; of whom it may be said, *Gods Name is in Him*, Exod. xxiii. 21. And then, if He restores 'em for his Names Sake, it is for his Sons Sake; 'tis on his Account, who has both by his Sacrifice and Intercession pre-  
then,

vail'd with his Father that they miscarry not. SERM.  
Go to God then and plead his Relation to thee: VIII.  
plead his Promise: plead his Name, not only

as a Shepherd, but as a merciful God: And plead  
the Merits of Jesus also, through whom, believe-  
ing in Him, thou shalt never want any necessa-  
ry good thing pleaded for by Faith in his Name.

These several Propositions fairly make Way  
for the following Application. If God restore  
the Souls of his declining People, then it will  
be proper for Us to ask,

(1.) Whether we are not in a declining State.  
There is such a Thing you have heard, which  
we are very prone to; and such a State must  
be dangerous. Do we find the Principle of a  
divine Life vigorous and active in Us as it  
has formerly been? Are we put upon, and  
stir'd up to each Duty in its proper Place? Do's  
this Principle animate and carry us on to Duty  
though Difficulties lie plainly in the Way of  
it? Are we inwardly and outwardly, as hoiy  
at least, as formerly we have been? Has God  
no Reason to complain of Us as He once did  
of languishing *Ephesus*, *remember from whence  
thou art fallen, and repent, and do thy first Works?*  
Is Sin now as odious to you as ever it was? Are  
you as much afraid of it as ever, and as watch-  
ful against it? have you as quick a Sense of  
the Guilt and Defilement of Sin? are your  
Consciences as tender as they Use to be? have  
you as deep a Sense of your own Weakness and  
Frailty, of the Falseness and Treachery of your  
own

SERM. own Hearts? Are you as Jealous and Distrust-

VIII. ful of your selves as formerly? Are your Ap-  
 petites as Strong in hungering and thirsting  
 after Righteousness as ever they were? Has the  
 Name of Jesus the same amiable and charming  
 sound to your Souls as once it had? Have you  
 the same Relishes for the Word of God, his  
 Commands, Promises, and Threatenings? Have  
 you the same Love to the People of God as  
 formerly? Does the Image of God in 'em ap-  
 pear as amiable to you as ever? Are the things  
 of this World of as little Account with you as  
 they used to be? Does the World and all the  
 Enjoyments and Gains of it appear vain, tran-  
 sitory, and unsatisfying? And what you dare  
 not think of taking up with as your Portion?  
 Can you value your Relation to God, your In-  
 terest in Him, and the Comforts of Holiness as  
 high as ever? Do unseen things affect and in-  
 fluence you as much as formerly? A God unseen,  
 a Saviour, a Sanctifier, a holy Godhead? When  
 you consider what you *have* been, and now are;  
 have you no Reason to complain, and say, *Oh,*  
*that it were with me as in Months past!*

(2.) If, upon Enquiry, you find no Reason to  
 complain, then let God have all the Praise. It  
 was He that establish'd your Souls in Good-  
 ness: It was He that upheld them in this Spi-  
 ritual Life: 'tis the Effect of his Power, Wis-  
 dom, and Goodness: own Him in it; bless and  
 love Him for it: don't arrogate any thing to  
 your selves: Whatever was the Instrument of  
 this



this Mercy, the great God by his Spirit was the Author of it: No Creature cou'd have sav-  
ed you from such a State: None else cou'd  
have prevented your Lusts recovering their  
lost Strength again, or the Enemies of your Souls  
from usurping that tyrannical Dominion over  
you which they formerly had.

(3.) If you find, upon Enquiry, that you have  
been declining, you must next enquire whether  
God has restored your Souls or not. Have you re-  
cover'd your wonted Taste and Relish of spiritual  
Things? have they the same Force upon your  
Minds they used to have? is your sloth and be-  
numedness of Spirit worn off? are your Disposi-  
tions and Readiness to, your Pleasure and enlarg-  
edness in spiritual Work, returned again? Are  
the Wounds healed that Sin hath made? have  
you been humbled under a Sense of it, whether  
done against God, against your selves, or against  
others? Are you humbled to think what you  
have deserved thereby? Have you confess'd  
and mourn'd over your Sins with a thorough  
Contrition of Heart? Are you brought back to  
a serious regular, chearful Practice of neglected  
Duties? Is your Heart now thoroughly recon-  
ciled to 'em, and do you labour after universal  
Holiness with wonted Zeal and Diligence? Is  
the former Ply and Bias of your Souls return'd  
again? Are you now engaging your selves  
afresh to God in Hopes, not only of pardon-  
ing, but upholding Grace? It greatly concerns  
you to know that this be done, and without it  
you

SERM. you shou'd not be easy, since otherwise you'll  
 VIII. make the deeper gashes in your own Consciences,  
 and give the higher Provocation to the great  
 God.

(4.) If God has restored your Souls, blefs his Name for it. Adore his Grace that you were not suffer'd to sink in Hell: You might have sunk deeper and farther till the Pit had closed its Mouth upon you, had not this kind, this good Shepherd sought after and brought you back: Blefs his Name that He did not suffer you to finish the dreadful Separation which you so wickedly begun: You left Him without Provocation, nay, in Defiance of innumerable Obligations, and yet, as a kind and tender Shepherd He undertakes to reduce you.

(5) If you are yet under Declension, go to Him and pray that He wou'd restore your Souls. Own your Wickedness in leaving Him: Confess your Inability to trace those wicked Steps back again without his Assistance: Remember that you stand upon a shelving Bottom, where after one step you know not how to stop yourselves, and are soon beyond your Length: O beg that the good Spirit wou'd resume you under his Care and Conduct: Tell Him that you are unequal to the Tempter at any Time, and much more, now Satan has got the Advantage against you: say, you have done that against Him and against your selves that fills your Souls with guilty Fear and Horror, that if He suffer you to proceed in a declining state you must

must perish for ever, and beg that He wou'd pity a poor enslaved, defiled and sinking Soul: tell Him there's no Prospect of your Deliverance but through Him: ask him whether He will suffer you to be carried away and ruined while you are looking and crying to Him for Salvation: assure Him, and humbly protest before Him, that you will not leave his Footstool whatever comes of it. Say, " Lord, if thou wilt thou canst cleanse me from all this Pollution and Filth, and set me at Liberty from this Bondage: I have no other to go to, and am shut up from all other help in Heaven or in Earth."

(6.) and Lastly, Plead, that He wou'd do it for his own Names Sake. Say, " Thus and thus have I done, very foolishly; and have never a Word to say for my self why I shou'd not perish everlastingly: all that ever thou sayst against Backsliders, I own against my self: every One of thy Threatenings I see and confess to be just: if thou thunder me down to the lowest Hell with Loads of Guilt and Vengeance to welter for ever in Flames of Rage and Despair, I must through eternal Ages say, thou dost me no Wrong: Nay, thou hast done me much Good; for 'tis I who have destroy'd my self: thou wou'dst have gather'd me into the Arms of everlasting Mercy; but I wou'd not: I have forfeited all that is good, and deserved all that's Evil: but, Lord, what wilt thou do for thy great Name?"

SERM.

VIII.



SERM, " Name? what will become of thy Relation

VIII. " to me? what will *good and holy Souls* in Co-  
 venant say and think? will not *their* Hearts  
 " meditate Terror? will not their Hands hang  
 " down, and their Knees grow feeble? and  
 " what will *wicked Ones* think of it? will not  
 " thy Saints be discouraged, and others be made  
 " presumptuous? though I am worthless and  
 " thou owest me nothing; yet it is not a lit-  
 " tle thou owest to the Honour of thy own  
 " Name: while thou callest thy self thy Peo-  
 " ple's Shepherd, take Care, either that they  
 " shall not wander, or not be quite lost by  
 " wandering: shall thy Relation to them be an  
 " empty Title? shall they have no Advantage  
 " from it more than others have, nor thou have  
 " more Glory from it than others? glorify thy  
 " Name, O Lord, in reducing a poor Wander-  
 " er to thy self: *I have gone astray like a lost*  
 " *sheep, seek thy Servant* for thy Names Sake,  
 " that the wicked may not say, the Priviledges  
 " of thy own People are nothing."





# SERMON IX.

The Repentance of a CHURCH, its best and only Security.

Preach'd in the Year, 1715.

REVEL. II. 5.

*Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first Works; or else I will come unto thee quickly; and will remove thy Candlestick out of his Place except thou repent.*

**I**F the Day of Adversity be the Time for SERM.  
IX.  
Consideration, as the Wise Man tells us, *Eccles. vii. 14.* then no Season so proper for it as the present, when our Land is becoming an *Aceldama* by the Rebellion of its Natives at Home, and the Invasions of its most implacable and bloody Enemies Abroad; and what's worst of all, when Religion seems just expiring. If we are capable of a serious Thought, we can never think it more Seasonable, than  
P
when

SERM. when we behold the Enemies of Godliness so

IX. numerous violent and outrageous, and those  
 who call themselves its Friends so cold and indifferent in the Profession and Practice of it. Are not abounding Iniquity, cooling Affections, and a prevailing stupour and unconcernedness for the Cause of God sad Symptoms? A considering Mind can't but *tremble for the Ark of God*, and the Interest of Jesus among that People and Nation, the far greatest Part of which are sunk into Prophaneness, Sensuality, and Worldliness, and the rest are either utterly, or in a great Measure careless what becomes of the Gospel and its Interests. Nor can there be any rational Prospect, that this dear Blessing shou'd be long continued amongst us who, after long Enjoyment and no Improvement, are still sinking lower and deeper in our guilty Abuse of it; whilst the Life and Power of Religion daily looses Ground and dwindles into Form and Appearance, and the Negligence and Disorder of our Lives sadly evidence the want and decay of it in our Hearts.

Our Case is so very like that of the Church mention'd in the Context, that I don't know any Warning so suitable for *Us*, as this which was sent to *them*: and from thence I wou'd offer a few Things to your Consideration at this Time. In the first Verse, we are told who sends this Message, and to whom it is sent; in the second and third Verses, Christ commends them for their Faithfulness to Him and Zeal  
 for



for Him in several Instances; but notwithstanding, they were guilty of the Loss of their *first Love*, which He cou'd not bear with, and therefore tells 'em of it, v. 4, 5, warn's 'em of their Danger and advises 'em what Course to take thereupon.

I shall not stand to make any curious Enquiry after the Meaning of the Terms here made Use of: It shall suffice me to take 'em as they are generally explain'd: by the *Angel of the Church of Ephesus* I understand the *Minister* thereof; by the *Candlesticks* being removed is meant the *Gospel and Ordinances* being taken away. And then the Sense of the Words will be to this or the like Effect: "Remember  
" what Influence the first Preaching of the Gospel had upon your Hearts and Lives, how  
" powerfully it prevail'd upon you to become  
" new Creatures, and how unlike your present  
" Love to God, and Zeal and Diligence in his  
" Service is to the first Fruits of your Profession, and repent of this your Declension, and  
" return to your former Affection and Obedience, which unless you do, I shall come  
" quickly and remove my Gospel; for though  
" I may sometimes bear long with those who  
" abuse this Light set up in dark Countries  
" and dark Hearts, yet I will not always do  
" it." This warning *We* must observe if we wou'd not provoke our God to remove his Candlestick from Us. The Words afford us this Ground of Discourse.

SERM. That the only Way for the declining Professors of Christianity to prevent the Gospels being removed from 'em, is to remember whence they are fallen, to repent and to do the first Works,

In speaking to this I shall shew

- I. How we must remember whence we are fallen.
- II. What it is to repent and do our first Works.
- III. The Import of removing the Candlestick, and what of Judgment there is in it: and then make some Improvement of the whole.

I. I shall shew how we must remember whence we are fallen.

(I.) We must remember the very different Influence, the Truths of the Gospel had upon the Minds, and Lives of the first Christians, from what they have upon the Professors of it in our Days. How sad Evidence of this is there in all our religious Affairs? Every thing was then maintain'd according to the Institution of our blessed Lord without Innovation in Doctrine, Discipline or Worship: But now, how are the *Foundations out of Course*? With what Obstinacy and Impudence have we seen impious, blasphemous, libertine and heretical Tenets broach'd and defended? With what Zeal and Earnestness have others been introducing

ducing their own Inventions into the House of God, and with the utmost Rigour imposing them upon others, filling the Temple with Anger and Contention, where the Noise of an Hammer and Ax ought not to be heard, and have given up the Peace and Prosperity of the Church a Sacrifice to things indifferent in themselves, as though Love and Unity, Meekness and Forbearance, had been utter Strangers to the Christian Society, neither known to 'em, nor practised by 'em? *They continued steadfast in the Apostles Doctrine and Fellowship, and in breaking of Bread and in Prayer.* But, God knows, how widely different the present State of Christianity is, how little their Doctrines are believ'd or practised: So far from it, that the Doctrines of Faith, Regeneration, Original Sin and other Fundamentals of our holy Religion, are almost exploded by the great Pretenders to Learning and Reason of our Days; and it were well if the Infection had not reach'd many even of those who *wait at the Altar*, and whose Profession obliges 'em to defend such Truths both by their Preaching and Practice.

And as to Christian Fellowship, we are such Strangers to it that we have scarce the Shadow or Name of it among us: The thing *it self* however is almost quite lost. How little holy Communication have the Children of God one with another? They don't now as formerly *speak often one to another*: Hence there does of Course follow a greater Unfitness for sitting at



SERM. the Lords-Table and praying together. Formerly they had nothing of which they cou'd not say, it *seemed good to the Holy Ghost* that it shou'd be so: But what Corruptions have since prevail'd in the Christian Church? witness the Legends and Impostures of the Romish Antichrist, and the dreadful Ignorance of the Greek Christians.

But our chief concern is to remember whence *We* are fallen with Regard to Practice, and that with Respect both to God and Man: If we consider the first Christians Devotedness to God and Zeal for Him, with what a Holy Fervour did their Hearts continually glow and burn within 'em, and in how bright a Flame did this break out in their Lives and Conversations? It's impossible to represent their Zeal and Diligence for God unless I felt something of the same Kind in my own Heart; nor is it easy to imagine the tender and hearty Concern with which they were inspired for the Interest of their common Lord, the noble Resolvedness and Greatness of Soul, that steady and unshaken firmness of Mind with which they encounter'd Difficulties, bore the Scorn and Hatred, the Rage and Violence of all their Enemies, and how careful and Solicitous they were that the Enemies Mouth might not be justly open'd, or the good Ways of their God evil spoken of. How fervent were their Prayers? How frequent their Communions and Fastings? How great was their Abstinence, Mortification, Deadness  
to

to the Pleasures, Honours and Profits of the SERM. World? With what Joy and Eagerness did IX. they attend upon the Apostles Preaching? How were they throng'd and follow'd from Place to Place? How did a Sermon rejoice and glad their Hearts? But now, how easily is a Lords Day or two lost as of little or no Value? Christians formerly wou'd have *pluckt out their own Eyes* for their Preachers, so ready were they to comply with their Directions: But now Ministers may call upon their Hearers from Day to Day, and Year to Year, advise and admonish them in private as well as publick before they can perswade 'em to one Duty, or to leave one beloved Lust. We read that thousands then were awaken'd and converted by a Sermon; but now, how many Years, nay Lives are spent, and hardly any brought Home to God? What a poignant Touch did Gods Word give their Hearts, when they cried out, *Men and Brethren, what shall we do?* But now, how oft may we call upon the Unbeliever, Backslider, nay, the Regenerate themselves and can't be heard? Our loudest Calls, most serious and earnest Entreaties, sweetest Promises, and most awful Threatenings won't even keep our Hearers waking: With what holy Ardour, Affection, Faith and Reverence did they receive the Word of God? But Oh! the different State of Religion: How often do we suffer the Flame to die upon the Altar by our Infrequency in approaching it? And how little are we ac-

SERM. quainted with the primitive Zeal and Fervour

IX. in the worship of God? Does not the very reverse run through our Assemblies now? What worldly, proud, wandering, lustful and disaffected Hearts do we bring into the Presence of God? And what sleepiness and gazing do we indulge in our Bodies? How little of that inward or outward Reverence is there in our Worship, for which the primitive Christians were so conspicuous? To that degree do's a want of this prevail, that a Stranger coming amongst us wou'd little imagine that we were worshipping our God now, while we are praying to Him, or praising of Him, or hearing that Word by which we must be judged. A thousand Vanities command our Attention and Regard to 'em. That Word which used to pierce the Hearers to the Heart, and make 'em cry out, *What shall we do to be saved?* Now moves 'em not: They can attend upon it and go away as though it no way concern'd 'em, much less were of infinite Importance to them. Formerly the Christians worshiped God Day and Night; but now, how seldom is God attended on? or is He not put off with a few heartless Prayers, such as a hurrying World of Business and Diversion will allow, a noisy and distracted quarter of an Hour sometimes before Noon, and a sleepy one before Bed Time, just enough to keep Conscience quiet and still without ever observing what becomes of their Prayers, what they get, what Progress they make in Grace and

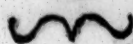


and Holiness, whether their Lusts are weaken'd, SERM.  
 their Hearts and Lives made better, what they IX.  
 enjoy of God, or whether He hide his Face or  
 no, what has been the Voice of his Providences  
 towards them, and how they improve 'em. Is  
 this like the first Disciples of our Lord? Is this  
 becoming, or like to be profitable? They were  
 careful and diligent in studying the Word of  
 God, and conforming themselves to the Com-  
 mands and Example of our Lord and his Fol-  
 lowers. They *search'd the Scriptures* to con-  
 firm them in their Knowledge of, Resolution  
 for, and Love to holy Truths: But how little  
 of this Care, how little of this Study is there  
 amongst Us? Virgins and Servants wou'd then  
 discourse of Gods Word and their spiritual Con-  
 cerns in the midst of their secular Business  
 and domestick Affairs, and when they walk'd  
 in the Way; of all which how little, alas! how  
 very little is there amongst us? The generali-  
 ty by their Practice seem to have found a near-  
 er Way to Heaven than those before 'em,  
 as though there was not that need of Violence,  
 that the primitive Christians used.

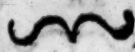
And if we consider them with Respect to  
 one Another, they were the most perfect and  
 amiable Patterns: There was nothing amongst  
 'em but Love: This was their Livery, *see how*  
*the Christians love one another*; all one Brother-  
 hood, and like Brethren they lived in all Ten-  
 derness of Affection. This shou'd make Us  
 with shame and grief call to Mind into what  
 Crumbs

SERM.

IX.



Crumbs of Christianity our Factions have mangled us? What is become of Christian Union and Harmony now a Days? How little of it among Us? How are we fallen from our *Simplicity that is in Christ*? 2 Cor. xi. 3. The first Christians were animated by One Heart, and One Soul; so perfect was their Love and Agreement; while we are torn into different Parties and Interests, opposing each other with a Heat and Violence most contrary to the Design and Spirit of Christianity. How excellent and abundant do we find their Works of Charity? *Acts* ii. 44, 45. a pregnant Proof of that Affection which reign'd in their Hearts towards *the Brethren*: But how sadly visible is the Difference when *every One seeks his own*? How honest and punctual in their Dealings, as *Pliny* witnesses of 'em? and how dead to all their worldly Interests, of which they gave the most convincing Evidence, when the Interest of the Church, or the Relief of the poor and necessitous call'd 'em to distribute a Part or even all their Possessions? How readily and chearfully did they forego what was dearest to 'em in this World? Nay, with Gladness and Exultation did they give up Life it self *as soon*, and often *before* it was called for, rejoicing that they were *thought worthy to suffer for the Name of the Lord Jesus*, according to the Example and Doctrine of the Apostles, *Acts* v. 41. *Phil.* i. 28. But, O blessed Jesus, if these were thy true Disciples, if these were the Men that were most conform'd to thy Example,

Example, if these were the Persons that so SERM.  
exactly did thy Will, how unworthy are we IX.  
of that sacred Name who bear it now? 

What a Dishonour to Thee and thy Holy Religion, who treat our Brethren and Fellow-Christians with so much Coldness and Reserve, not to say, Hatred, Contempt, and Scorn? Instead of their Mortification, here's alas! our Pride and Luxury: Instead of their Honesty Justice and Faithfulness, our Fraud Oppression and Violence: Instead of their Deadness to the World and Heavenly-Mindedness, our Covetousness, and Deadness to things Spiritual. Oh dreadful Reverse of the true and genuine Effects of Christianity! What need have we to remember whence we are fallen?

(2.) We must remember whence we are fallen since the Time of the first Reformation from Popery. This, it's true, was not so bright as the first Age of Christianity; though I question not but it comes nearest to the primitive Apostolical Pattern of any other; yet how great a Reproach is this to us who come so far behind *them* in every Excellence? Those good and holy Men under the Conduct of the Spirit made such glorious Efforts to regain the Happy Golden Age, as never were made by any not immediately inspired, and to purge the Temple of the Lord of all the Filth and Superstition which the Pride and Lusts of Men had brought into it, whereby the Institutions of our blessed Lord were so disguised that the Life and Power  
of



SERM. of Religion were lost in Noise and Pomp, and  
 IX the Souls of Men perih'd in Ignorance with-

out ever being able to know where and how to find the Way of Life and Safety. How resolved, bold, and courageous do we find 'em for the Cause of Christ? How vigorous in the midst of all Dangers and Difficulties? and by an incredible Zeal and Industry (attended with a divine Blessing) what wonderful Success did they meet with? Their whole Hearts seem'd to be set upon this, to bring Men to the *Acknowledgment of the Truth as it is in Jesus*, and from this blessed Work, neither the Threatenings or Promises, the Rage or Favour of their Enemies cou'd divert 'em. And such was their Preaching and Practice, or they backed their serious and convincing Doctrines with such holy exemplary Lives, that Wickedness fled before 'em: Thousands were converted to the Love and Practice of Holiness; and *they*, being thus deliver'd from the State of Darkness and Bondage into Light and Freedom, were a Credit and an Honour to the Gospel.

In one Word to such a Degree were the Hearts and Lives of Men reform'd, that I am perswaded the World never saw before so lively a Draught of Primitive Christianity, or so clean a Copy and Transcript of what our Lord and his Apostles had taught and practised. But, alas! *How is the Gold become dim? How is the fine Gold changed?* Nothing cou'd be so sweet to 'em as reading the Holy Scriptures.

This

This was an Exercise so delightful and so much practised, that their Enemies from thence called them by Way of Reproach, *Gospellers*. They wou'd run in Crouds to hear the Word of God read, and when Bibles were so scarce and dear that the poorer sort cou'd not purchase 'em, a Leaf or a Chapter was prized above Gold: And we are told that a poor Old Woman who was blind, having procured a New Testament, hired a Child to read a Chapter to Her every Day, all which she did secretly for Fear of Discovery which wou'd have endanger'd her Life. What a Reproach is this Zeal and Love of theirs for the Oracles of God to Us, who have so little Value and Relish for that Blessed Book, and who read it and regard it but as a common Thing? Oh! how do *our full Souls loath the Honey Comb*, when to their hungry Souls every Morfel had a peculiarly pleasant Gust and Sweetness? We hear till we surfeit, and it grows (I wish there was not too great Reason to say) nauseous to us. *The Word of the Lord was precious in those Days*; but now of little Value: Our Bibles lie by neglected, and in Dust, from Week to Week: *This is for a Lamentation, and shou'd be for a Lamentation*. They were so strictly Religious and Holy in their Lives and Conversations, so watchful and accurate, and so scrupulous of Sin, that their Enemies by way of Reproach gave 'em the Nick-name of *Puritans*: But how little Occasion for that Name among Us? There seems  
(sad

SERM. (sad to speak it) to belittle Difference between

IX. Us and Others, if any at all. We lean towards the Men of the World, and conform our selves to their Language, Manners, and Customs to obtain their good Opinion or Word of Us; and value our selves upon being better thought of by those whose *Favour* a Wise Man knows *is nothing worth*: And I can't but think this has been one great Reason of our present Loss of Purity and serious Godliness, that Men, for Fear of being thought precise and strait-laced by the World, have given themselves those Liberties that have been fatal to themselves in the Issue, and the Consequences have been dreadful with Respect to others, and I fear to Religion itself amongst some sort of Men. The Truth is, in short, that we wou'd not be call'd *Puritans*, and we take Care not to deserve the Name; and we have so well acquitted our selves that, were the *Old Puritans* now alive, they wou'd justly be ashamed of us: Though we profess our selves their Disciples and Followers, yet how little of their Spirit and Seriousness is to be found amongst Us? *O quam mutatus ab Illo!* They scarce ever met in those Days without praying together, and oft associated themselves for that very Purpose: They spent their Time in holy Conference with each other about spiritual Matters, communicating their Experiences, relating their Comforts, their Burdens, Doubts and Fears, their Helps and Mercies, their Temptations and Deliverances; But,  
 alas!



alas! just the contrary is our Temper: Our Religion (if we have any) is confined to our Closets, and a little shew of it to our Families; and we labour under a foolish and sinful shyness and aversion to own that we have any concern about the everlasting Welfare of our Souls, as though we were fearful or ashamed to have it known that there is any Difference (more than in Pretence) between us and others. *My Brethren, these Things ought not so to be.* How little do Gods People glory Him as they ought, when they conceal from others the great Things that God has done for 'em? Closeness and Reservedness, Shyness and Distance is not the Way to gain Knowledge and Experience in spiritual Things. I acknowledge there ought to be the strictest Watch kept over our Spirits lest we play the Hypocrite and thank God for what He never gave us, and pretend to that we have not: But the Possibility of Hypocrisy and Ostentation in *this*, is no more an Argument against *it* than against *other Duties*; but as in those, so in this, a Reason why we shou'd be very watchful over our Hearts in such Conversation. I don't deny but that some may have been imprudent in their Management of it, in not having Regard enough to Time and Place and Company; but this I am sure of, that when discreetly and seriously managed nothing can have a greater Tendency to enliven our Affections, quicken us in our Duty, strengthen our Graces, and improve our

Com-

SERM. Comforts: You may ordinarily learn more in  
IX. one half Hour's Conversation from the Experi-

ence of sincere communicative Christians, than a considerable Time spent in studying the most learned Divines: And let me advise those of you who have never known what are the Advantages of such a Conversation to get the Acquaintance of the People of God; Value them highly, confer with them frequently, tell 'em your Case and enquire of 'em how they have been and are: And you who have had such but dropt it, (though the Pleasures and Advantages of it are so great that I can scarce think there are such,) seek for it and renew it: there is no Way of thriving in Spirit like it: Pray together; Confer and compare Cases together; Think whence you are fallen with Respect to your Resemblance of the first Reformers: With this Spirit I shall have great Hopes to see Religion revive, but not till then.

(3.) If you consider *your own first Works*, may you not have Reason to remember whence you are fallen, and be ashamed for your Loss of your first Love. When the Grace of God first made its Entrance into your Hearts, when you were newly converted from spiritual Darknes and *made Light in the Lord*, don't you remember how your tender Hearts dissolved under the Impressions of Divine Love and Grace? Call to Mind how loathsome and hateful your Guilty Soul appear'd to it self, when every Sin was shown in its native Uglinefs; How ex-  
ceeding

ceeding Sinful did it then appear? How evil and bitter a thing did you then think it to depart from the living God, while your Hearts were broken and bleeding under a Sense of it? Remember the Throws and Anguish, the convulsive Pangs and Twinges of your startled Conscience, when the Thoughts of living any longer in Sin were intolerable, and to have it lodge any longer in your Bosom a Burden which you cou'd not bear: You saw and thought your selves undone till you cou'd be deliver'd from the Dominion and Guilt of it: Can't you remember the Time when your Eyes and Hands and Hearts were up to God, and your whole Soul pour'd out before Him in the humblest Confessions of Sin, and Condemnation of your selves for it, and the most fervent and earnest Cries for Pardon and Deliverance, and that you cou'd not rest till God had heard and help'd you; when your Desire was for a Christ, and nothing but a Christ; " Lord give me Him, and Peace and Grace and Pardon thro' Him, or I perish and am undone, I *will* have nothing, I *can* have nothing but Him; " allbesides are vain and helpless to my distressed Soul, miserable Comforters, and *Physicians of no Value.*" Don't you remember how unwilling you were to leave your Knees till you had prevail'd? How seasonably has God given Peace to your wounded Spirit, and Pardon to your guilty Soul? How refreshing and Sweet has a Promise come? What a Calm and Tran-

Q

quility



SERM. quility has it made in your Minds? Oh! how

IX. dear, how precious, how lovely was Christ to  
 your Souls in those Days? How desirable was  
 it, to have an Interest in the Favour and Co-  
 venant of God? This was even *all your Sal-*  
*vation* and the Top of all your Wishes: What  
 a high Value did you set upon the *Light of Gods*  
*Countenance*? And how Sweet and Comforta-  
 ble was it to *Walk* therein? But, on the other  
 Hand, how terrible were the Apprehensions of  
 his Displeasure? How glad were you of the  
 Spirits Motions and Strivings? It rejoiced  
 your Hearts to find Him at Work with you;  
 and how chearfully did you strike in with Him,  
 and cherish his Motions, and how fearful were  
 you not to grieve Him away from you? O!  
 how pleasant and delightful has this made all  
 your Duties? With what tender Affections and  
 melting Passions have your Souls been offer'd  
 up to God? With what holy Fervour has the  
 Love of God and Christ *constrained* you to love  
 them? How low have you sunk in godly  
 shame and sorrow for Sin? How importunate-  
 ly have you cried for Pardon? How have you  
 wrestled with God for further Degrees of Sanc-  
 tification, for Increase and Growth of Grace?  
 What a Relief and Support have you found  
 it, to tell Him all your Grievs, to com-  
 plain of your Lusts, as *his* and *your* Souls  
 Enemies, and to beg the Death of 'em? How  
 oft have you obtain'd Help and Deliverance?  
 either by the Removal of Temptations, or Ad-  
 ditional

ditional Strength to Oppose and overcome SERM.  
'em? And when your Duty has been thus IX.  
sweeten'd and thus reviving, how unwilling

have you been to leave the Throne of Grace,  
ready to say, *it's good to be here?* Don't you  
remember how you have been even wrapt up  
in holy Meditations of the Love and Glory of  
God and Christ and Heaven? How easy did  
you then find it to bid adieu to every Lust,  
to resolve against and Oppose your darling  
Iniquity with your whole Souls, and abhor the  
very Thoughts of returning again to it? You  
found a vital active and holy Principle with-  
in that prompted you to this, and made it na-  
tural easy and Delightful: At how high a Rate  
did you value the Peace of your own Minds?  
How tender and sensible was Conscience?  
And how careful were you not to pollute or  
disturb it? When Temptations did beset you,  
remember how you run for Protection to your  
Father, complain'd of 'em, told Him they were  
*his* as well as *your* Enemies, and that if  
they prevail'd, it wou'd be to *his* Dishonour  
as well as the *Hurt* of *One* who trusted in  
Him for Security; and with what Earnestness  
and Confidence you begged Strength against  
them: Or if you had been surprized by the  
Enemy, how soon did you betake your selves  
to Him with sorrow to confess your Sin, and  
beg recovering, healing Grace to rise again and  
obtain his Favour and Pardon, and be more  
vigilant for the Time to come. Don't you

SERM. remember when Gods Word was precious to  
IX. you, *sweeter than Honey and the Honey Comb?*

Did it not take faster Hold of your Consciences and sink deeper into your Hearts, and were not your Lives so perfectly influenced by it, that you durst scarce take a step without its Direction? With what Pleasure did you read and hear it? This had a more grateful Relish than any thing beside. Was not the Example of Christ and his Apostles your most bright and amiable Pattern of Imitation? Did not the Joys of Heaven and the Horrors of Hell once make deeper Impressions on you? Don't you remember the Time when all the Pleasures and Profits of the World were no Temptations to you to forsake your God, and your Happiness in Him, and were of no more Force (so did Faith influence and sway you) than painted Glass, and Childrens Toys wou'd be to an Usurer to part with Gold or Diamonds?

Review these Things, whether this was not once your Temper, or something of this Sort; and see how very little of all this you now feel: How different is your whole spiritual State? What other Thoughts have you of Sin, of your own Hearts, of Christ and Pardon, of God and Heaven, of holy Love and Obedience, of the House and Word and People of God? How little is your Fear of Sin or Sorrow for it, your Watchfulness, Prayer and Diligence to prevent and mortify it? Don't you now find your selves cold, and dull, and sleepy in the  
the



the Service of God, that you are insensible of SERM.  
 your Sins and Wants, and Mercies, and that IX.  
 you can better live without the Favour of God  
 than before, and are less concern'd for the  
*hiding of his Face?* That you have not that  
 Care over your own Hearts and Suspicion of  
 their Treachery, or that Sense of their Wicked-  
 ness as heretofore? That your Prayers are more  
 heartless and lazy, and the Success of them  
 less observ'd than before? Does not the World  
 get Ground and spoil your spiritual Progress?  
 Is not Conscience now neglected, or bribed, or  
 forced into Silence? Is not the Spirit of God  
 grieved and opposed, and the Ordinances of  
 God neglected upon such Excuses as once you  
 cou'd not admit of? Is Communion with God  
 rated as high, and sought as diligently as ever?  
 Is not God put off with such Service as once  
 you cou'd not satisfy your selves with? What  
 an Account will be given of such an unhappy  
 Decay? What can you say for such a *loss* of  
*first Love?* A severe and sore Condemnation  
 will overtake you quickly, *the Candlestick* will  
 be *removed out of his Place*, unless you do as  
 you are caution'd in the other Part of the Text,  
 which is the

II. General Head I propos'd to speak to,  
 viz. *Repent and do the first Works*

*This Sermon may be divided here.*

(1.) We must repent, blush with Shame and  
 bleed with Grief for the Loss of so much first  
 Love amongst Us. And Oh! what a horrid and

SERM. frightful Scene here opens upon Us? What

IX: dreadful Wickedness and Abominations are  
 done among Us, and with all the aggravating  
 Circumstances possible? Atheism and Infidelity  
 overflows us like a Torrent: Prophaneness  
 and Debauchery are getting ground daily:  
 Swearing and Prophanation of Gods Name and  
 Day, are the Sins of our Times: And have we  
 not Reason to *mourn in Secret* for those *Abomi-*  
*nations* that are done openly without Fear or  
 Shame? And *for the Divisions of Reuben* shou'd  
 there not be great Thoughts of Heart? And if  
 we add to all these our Coldness and Indiffer-  
 ence, our Neglect and Loss of the Power of  
 Godliness, it may justly fill us with boding  
 Apprehensions, and chill our Blood and Spirits  
 to think what God will do with such a People.  
 What is there more than the Footsteps (and  
 those but dim Ones) of primitive Christianity,  
 or of a Reformation? That were a sober and  
 modest Heathen to make an Estimate of Re-  
 ligion from the Lives and Conversations of  
 those who ordinarily profess it, He wou'd cer-  
 tainly condemn it as the worst and vilest Re-  
 ligion in the World: What dreadful Wicked-  
 ness meets Us in every Place? It's almost im-  
 possible to Live in the World without the  
 highest Scandal, even from those who make a  
 Profession of Religion: We seem to make  
 our Boast of the Name of Christ, and take it  
 as an Honour to have that holy Name *called*  
*upon Us*, and at the same Time hate that Piety,  
 Purity

Purity and Simplicity which is the Distinguish- SERM.  
 ing Character of his Followers, and which his IX.  
 Doctrine above all Things requires of Us. Let  
 it humble and shame Us who profess so great  
 a Value for the *Name* of Christianity, that we  
 have no more for the *Thing*, for that Excellency  
 of Heart and Life which the Enemies of the  
 good old Christians so much admired them for.  
 Let it shame Us that we have no more Care to  
 draw down into our own Lives the excellent  
 Precepts of our Holy Religion, that we are  
 such perfect Strangers to that divine and Hea-  
 venly Spirit, that breath'd in their Hearts and  
 Lives, that there are none who stand in the  
 Way and see and enquire after the *good old Way*,  
 the Path wherein the ancient Christians walked.  
 Is it not justly Matter of Humiliation to us,  
 that while we ascribe so much to our selves  
 on Account of our Reformation, we are weary  
 even of the *Form of Godliness*? And it may  
 be justly question'd whether We or the Papists  
 have more of real Religion among Us. Because  
 of these Things our *Land shou'd Mourn, the*  
*Priests and People shou'd join in Weeping and*  
*Humiliation before the Lord, and shou'd sup-*  
*plicate the Majesty of Heaven and Earth that*  
*He wou'd spare his People, and not give up his*  
*Heritage to Reproach.* How shou'd we Mourn,  
 our Congregations apart for the Sins amongst  
 Us, and our Families apart for our Neglects  
 there, and our Persons apart for our Degene-  
 racy and Backslidings, for the Declensions and



SERM. Indifference of our own Hearts? The Word

IX. here translated, *Repent*, signifies to change our Minds or Sentiments, to have new Thoughts and Apprehensions about Things; as at our first Conversion we are said to become *new Creatures*. And thus there must be made a Change in our Spirits, which will lead us to follow the other Part of this Advice, namely:

(2.) *To do our first Works.* We must aspire after the same noble Zeal for God, and Devotedness of Soul to Him, which was so conspicuous in the Apostles of our Lord, and the first Christians. *Be ye Followers of them as they follow'd Christ*, and tread in their Steps who have fought the good Fight, and finish'd their course of Obedience and Sufferings, and are now inheriting the Promises. Let us set them before Us as our Copy, and often compare our selves with them; examine whether our inward Temper, and outward Conversation, do indeed denominate Us Servants of the same glorious Lord; whether or no we act suitably to our Character and Profession; or whether we have not Reason to blush when we rank our selves amongst them. We must labour to transcribe their Excellencies, and to resemble 'em in those Instances wherein they were most like their Lord; endeavour to have the Ordinances of God as pure and agreeable to their primitive Institution as may be; to disown the Scandalous and irregular, to imitate them in their Devotion, Prayers and Praises, in their  
Resolution

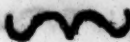
Resolution and Zeal for God, their Charity SERM.  
Simplicity and Love to each other, *provoking* IX.  
*one another* (not to Wrath and Contention, but)

*to Love and to good Works*: What their Practice was in the general, you may learn from the Precepts whereby it was regulated, *Ephes.* v. and vi. Chapters.

We shou'd also do the first Works of our pious Reformers, whose Zeal for God was blest with so great success, both against the Errors and Corruptions of Popery, and the Ignorance, Vice, and Wickedness of the World wherein they lived: I might add a great many things wherein they were very well worthy of our Imitation.

But I am chiefly concern'd to engage you all (as much as in me lies) to do your own first Works: You who are sunk into such spiritual Decays, endeavour with all your Might to revive in your Breasts that sacred Flame, that Love to God and Christ, his Word and Ordinances, that Pleasure you had in Communion with God, that Diligence in seeking and attending on Him: Revive the Remembrance of the Blessed Benefits you reap'd by Ordinances, the rich Comforts of your Souls, and the happy Progress you then made towards Heaven: *Consider the former Times, and the Days of Old*, what tokens you have had of the Love of God to your Souls, and the comfortable Thoughts and Evidences of yours towards God; the very Remembrance of which must now fill you with  
shame

SERM. shame and blushing. Endeavour to excite the

IX.  same Degrees of Holy Love to God and desires after Him, his Presence and Favour: Pray that you may again have the sweet and powerfully constraining Influences of his Grace to soften your hard Hearts, and subdue your stubborn Spirits, to awaken your Consciences and make 'em sensible of Sin. Rest not till your Souls are become more susceptible of divine Impressions, more obedient to Commands and aw'd by Threatenings; till you can see Sin, and *your* Sin in its own proper (hateful and cursed) Dress, and have a just Indignation against it; till you have good Grounds to Hope that God is at Peace with you, and your Souls reconciled to Him through the Blood of his Son, and the Grace of his Spirit; till you are become habitually careful of your own Hearts, fearful of Pollution, and of grieving the Spirit of God by Negligence, or an allowed Course of Sin; and till you are restored to a delightful Course of Obedience, Love and Devotedness to God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost; which is the only way to prevent,

III. The Removal of the Candlestick which is here threaten'd upon the Neglect of this Duty. I shall here shew that this Removal of the Candlestick is the Consequence of a remarkable Apostacy and Defection, and then how much of Judgment there is in this Case.



[1.] I shall shew that this is the Consequence of a remarkable Apostacy or Defection. But we must always understand this of some particular Church from which the Candlestick shall be removed; for the *Gates of Hell shall never prevail against the Church Universal*, Mat. xvi. 18. *A Seed shall serve Him and it shall be accounted to the Lord for a Generation*, Psal. xxii. 30. and so Psal. lxxxix. 29, 36. which is plainly a Prophecy of Christ: *His Seed will I make to endure for ever, and his Throne as the Days of Heaven*. But notwithstanding these and many other Promises made to the Church of Christ in general, that it shall endure; yet there is no Entail of it upon any particular spot of Ground, of which the Jews are a glaring Instance: There is now no spiritual Dew falls upon those Mountains of *Gilboa*, nor do the Drops of the *Sanctuary* descend there.

And by a no less remarkable Hand of God is this Church of *Ephesus* and her other Sister Churches laid waste, become indeed Children of Wrath, their *Candlestick is removed* and they sit in Darkness. God may justly take away those spiritual Advantages wherewith He has blest a People, when they have dishonour'd Him by the Abuse of their Privileges; and this without the Prejudice (much more without the Ruin) of the *Church Universal*. He may send the Gospel to others who have before sat in the *Land of the shadow of Death*, bring them nigh who were afar off, and make them a People who

SERM. *were not a People, that THEY might obtain Mercy*  
 IX. *who had not obtained Mercy.* The Gospel may

 be taken from a *Sinful People*, and given to a *Nation bringing forth the Fruits thereof*. And the Removal of the Gospel must be the Consequence of a Peoples Defection, because

(1.) When the Sins of a Community are become notorious and epidemical, the Justice of God makes it necessary that they shou'd be punish'd: And Judgments that befall a wicked People may full as properly be look'd upon as the Hand of God immediately as others, nay, more so; the Justice of God being (as it shou'd seem) more concern'd to punish Communities of Men here than single Persons, because there is an after-reckoning and Account wherein every Soul must be rewarded or punish'd according to its Behaviour in this state of Probation; so that though a private Person do escape the Animadversion of the supreme Judge on his Wickedness here, He will be met with in the next World: But unless Societies of Men suffer here for their Wickedness, they can't as Societies be punish'd at all, our Communities being dissolved by our Removal hence: If therefore they must be punish'd, it must be here: And as there is more of Sin in the Wickedness of a People professing Godliness; nay, since *their's* is the most crying and heinous, who are a People set apart for God Himself, who have been blest with the Light of the Gospel, the Ordinances of God and the Means  
 of

of Grace, this consequently renders them more deeply guilty and obnoxious than other Nations who have had only the Light of Nature to Direct themselves by ; They will be found to deserve a more severe and eminent Degree of Punishment : And accordingly we find God looks upon Himself as concern'd, to fix a distinguishing Mark of his Displeasure upon such, *Amos iii. 2. You only have I known of all the Families of the Earth: therefore will I punish you for all your Iniquities.* So in *Mat. xi. 21, 22, &c.*

And as the Sins of a People can rise no higher than the gross continued Abuse of the Gospel, and the concomitant Means of Grace, and when they are come to this the *Measure of their Iniquity* may be said to be *fill'd up* ; so the heaviest Judgment that can befall 'em, is the Removal of these from 'em ; which shews the Proportion between the Sin and Punishment, as well as that it is the Method of Gods Providence : But this I shall speak to by and by, when I have shewn

(2.) That this is the Consequence of Apostacy, in that it is often the Choice of a revolted People themselves. When they are fallen in Love with Wickedness, and won't endure the Truth to be spoken, and are for living in their Lusts easy and unmolested ; when they hate and persecute those who deal faithfully with 'em, corrupt the Worship of God, oppose all that's serious and holy, and encourage the wicked ; when they choose and wish not to hear



SERM. hear any troublesome Truths, rage against  
 IX. those who disturb 'em in their Sins, and will  
 endure none but what are like themselves;  
 and when such Men prevail in Number and  
 Authority, so that the Rest must either fly or  
 fall in with 'em: I say, when Matters are come  
 to this Pass, no Wonder that the Gospel is re-  
 moved; for then they are willing and desirous  
 to be rid of that which they can't live in  
 Peace with.

Thus it was with the *Jews* in the Time of  
*Jeremiah*: They quite expell'd the Worship  
 of the true God, and set up the Idolatrous  
 Worship of the Neighbouring-Nations: They  
 persecuted and put to Death the Servants of  
 God; so that the taking away the divine Wor-  
 ship from amongst them was properly their  
 own Choice: And, Oh! how far this is ap-  
 plicable to Us, it's easy to observe from our  
 unaccountable Neglect of the sacred Scriptures,  
 which is a prevailing Distemper among Us.  
 How unconcern'd and without Awe do the Ge-  
 nerality attend upon Gods Word? and how  
 regardless are they of the most awakening Calls  
 and Alarums of it? The Management of a  
 great many among Us, is visibly no other than  
 a Preparation for that Religion which professes  
 to shut out this Gospel Light, that so the  
 Works of Darknes may succeed undiscover'd:  
 And does not our general Formality Presage  
 our Readiness for any, for no Religion? Is  
 not our Indifference the Cause of our Unpro-  
 fitableness?

fitableness? And have we not before our Eyes **SERM.**  
a sad and lively Warning whither that tends, **XI.**  
and what will be the Effects of it if we con-

tinue thus under such Means and Advantages?  
And have we not a fearful Instance of the  
Truth of this Warning in my Text, in those  
Churches who now feel the Threatening be-  
cause they wou'd not *repent* and believe and *do*  
*their first Works*? And their Case will be a little  
exemplify'd in speaking to the second Part of  
this general Head which was to shew

[2.] How much of Judgment there is in this  
Case. And what can be greater than this? See  
it set forth, *Ezek. vii. 23, &c. Psal. lxxiv. 9,*  
*10.* The Church complains of this as intolerable,  
and the greatest Curse a People can fall  
under: Without the Candlestick here spoken of,  
what can this Earth be but a Hell, and what  
wou'd Men be better than Devils? *My Spirit*  
*shall not always strive with Man*, was that which  
made the Misery of the *Old World* compleat.  
That this is a very great Judgment will ap-  
pear if we consider,

(1.) That the Gospel is the greatest of all  
other Mercies. Hereby *Life and Immortality*  
*are brought to Light*. Here we have the best  
Notions of God and our selves taught Us.  
Hence we learn to think and speak and live  
like our selves, and suitably to the Relation  
we stand in to God and Man. By this a Peo-  
ple are raised to Heaven; to the Belief, the  
Knowledge, Desire, Expectation and Hope of  
it;

SERM. it; taught the way to it, and how to seek and

IX. obtain Help in that Way; that God is good  
 and kind as well as great and Glorious; that  
 He is reconcilable to Us through his Son, who  
 has purchased our Redemption with his own  
 Blood; and that by his Spirit of Grace our  
 Souls are refined, our Minds sanctified, im-  
 proved, elevated, and prepared for everlasting  
 Glory.

What shall I add, this is the best security,  
 Persons have of the Duties they owe one ano-  
 ther in every Relation and Circumstance of  
 Life. Here are the strongest Ties to it, both  
 of Reason and Interest, as we are private Per-  
 sons, or Members of a Society. This is the  
 best Solace to an afflicted Mind, the support  
 of the Opprest, the guide of the Doubtful and  
 Mistaken, Succour for the Tempted, Relief  
 for the Neceffitous, and in one Word, it is all  
 from Beginning to End *good Will towards Men*:  
 We may better part with our dearest Blessings,  
 our sweetest Comforts, the Sun out of the Hea-  
 vens, or our own Eyes and Walk in Darknefs,  
 than with this spiritual inward Direction, with-  
 out which we mistake our Way to Blessedness.

The Removal of the Oracles of God was  
 threaten'd to the *Jews* as the heaviest of all  
 Plagues, many Descriptions of which, we have  
 both in the Old and New Testament, being  
 denounced against their Temple, and to re-  
 move them *out of the Sight of God*, (or from  
 his special Favour and the Privileges that were  
 con-



SERM.

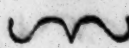
IX.

(2.) When God removes the Candlestick a way from any Nation, other Blessings commonly remove with it. When the *Ark of God* was lost, not only the Glory of God's special Favour and Presence went along with it, but their Glory of being a free People. They fell under Subjection and Slavery to their Enemies: The Ordinances of God and Liberties of Mankind often expire together: When *sacred Privileges* are sin'd away, *civil* ones rarely continue long after. Thus it was with the *Israelites* at the Destruction of their Temple: They *themselves* were carried away. And so it was, no less remarkably, at the Destruction of the *second Temple*: Their whole *Polity* was taken away. Thus it was with the *Eastern Churches*, all of them at once almost, and particularly, those seven mention'd in the ii. and iii. chap. of *Rev.* What terrible Monuments are they to this Day of the Divine Vengeance both with Respect to Religion and Civil Government? How visible are the Marks of Gods displeasure upon 'em even now? They are scarcely inhabited, some of 'em scarcely known,

R

whereas

SERM. whereas they were once some of the most famous rich and flourishing Cities in the World.

IX.  Thus God *turns a fruitful Land into Barrenness for the Wickedness of them that dwell therein*, Psal. cvii. 34. And in a Reign not without the reach of some of *your* Memories, were not the Religion and Liberties of our Land both sinking together? And who knows not that this is our present Case, that they must both stand or fall at once; for none can be so grossly ignorant as not to know that the Religion that seeks the Ruin of ours will be absolute where it prevails both over the Bodies and Consciences of Men.

I need not, I cannot say any more to shew you how great a Judgment the loss of the Gospel is, only this in short, that we have lost our Land, our Government, our Posterity, and all Blessings Temporal and Spiritual: Nay, we have nothing worth our wishing or enjoying when the Gospel is gone from Us.

#### By Way of Application.

(1.) Let us *hear and fear and do no more so wickedly*. How do we know but that God has limited our Day of enjoying the Gospel? God knows, (and we may know if we seriously be-think our selves) what we have Reason to expect, even the Removal of the Candlestick. We have made the Forfeiture ten thousand Times, and God *may* take it at our Hands. You  
know

know the *Ground that brings forth Briars and Thorns is rejected, and nigh unto Cursing*, Heb. IX. SERM.

vi. 8. You know the *Fig-tree* was sentenced to be cut down only for *three Years Barrenness*; and all the Intercession that was made for it was but for *one Year* longer Continuance, Luke xiii. 6, 7, 8. Are not we a *Vineyard* whom God has planted in a *fruitful Hill*, enclosed and fenced? and *what cou'd have been done more for Us that has not been done?* Yet have we brought forth *wild Grapes*: and may we not expect that our *Tower and Wall shou'd be broken down and taken away?* That we shou'd be laid in common with others, and the wild Beasts suffer'd to ravage amongst Us? God will not always be at so much Expence with Us, and have no Fruits answerable to his Care. And what can be a more affecting Thought, than that after so long a Time, so many Means, so much Trial and Patience God has nothing but Dis-honour from Us, that we are growing Worse under the Means of Improvement, and that (if our Day shou'd end before we repent and do our first Works,) our Condemnation will be most inexpressibly sad and terrible? Let this fair Warning then be taken: Let this Threatening be fear'd, and let us break off our Sins by Repentance and turn unto the Lord our God, that so *He may return and have Mercy upon Us that we perish not.*

(2.) Bless God who has continued the Gospel so long among you. You have had it for an



SERM. Age and half last past. You have been like

IX. *Gideons Fleece moisten'd with the Dew of Heaven* whilst Others have dwelt in a parched Land, a waste and howling Desert. The heavenly Manna has fallen richly and in Abundance round about your Tents. You have been fed with the Bread of Life that comes down from Heaven. God has furnish'd you with the choicest Provisions of his own Granary. You have been fed to the full while others have been hungry, and have had no Interruption of these Streams from the City of God.

(3.) Improve the Blessed Light and glorious Privilege whilst you have it, and do the Works before recommended that you may prevent the Removal of this Candlestick. Repent and do your first Works and cry mightily unto the Lord: Who knows what the small Number here might do by such a Course, even for the whole Christian Interest? Moses was heard for the Rebellious Israelites. Call then upon God if so be he may think upon Us that we perish not. This is a Time, and ours are Circumstances that will make our Hearts meditate Terror. We can't but tremble for fear of God and be afraid of his Judgments. The past are for the most Part too much forgotten, and the Signs of the Times foreboding Evil to come very little regarded.

I can't but hope that all who wish well to Sion and make Conscience of praying for the Peace of Jerusalem, who wou'd have our Posterity

rity a Nation of British Protestants and not of SERM.  
 Popish Bigots or French Slaves, will wrestle IX.  
 with God for the turning away his Anger, for  
 Deliverance from his and our Enemies, for the  
 Establishment, Preservation and Blessing of the  
 King upon the Throne and all the Royal Fa-  
 mily, for success upon the Ordinances of his  
 Worship, and above all for the Influence of his  
 Grace upon the rising Generation of Ministers  
 and People, and particularly upon the *Seed of*  
*the Righteous*. It's very evident that if there  
 ever was, there now is great need of solemn  
 fervent Prayer to be sent up to Heaven for  
 Us. Has God ever done more for a People  
 than for Us? and from whom has He met with  
 worse Returns? Does not this call for Prayer  
 and Humiliation? Can we hope to be forgiven  
 without so much as asking and repenting? We  
 have enjoy'd a long Gospel-Day and have We  
 no Reason to fear an approaching Night? Our  
 Brethren abroad have *witnessed in Sack-cloth and*  
*Ashes*; and shou'd not this stir us up to Prayer  
 both for them and for our selves? They have  
 suffer'd hard Things; have been many of them  
*Slain for the Testimony of Jesus*: And is this  
 nothing to Us? Is it not for our Warning?  
 Have we not defiled our selves; and must we  
 not be purged either by Prayer and Reforma-  
 tion, or by Judgment and Desolation? (The  
 Text offers Us our Choice of the two.) Are  
 not our Divisions a sad Presage? and may not  
 God let in our common Enemy to *mingle our*

SERM. *Blood with our Sacrifices?* How is Gods Day  
 IX. prophaned, his Ministers and Ordinances despised and slighted? And *will not God visit for these Things? will not his Soul be avenged on such a Nation as this?* What open scandals are there in the Lives of Professors, which witness to our Faces that we are a God-provoking People? What Pride, Lying, Worldliness, Luxury, Neglect of Family-Religion, and Degeneracy of the Off-spring of pious Parents? There has scarce been any End of our Provocations; and how can we look, without extraordinary Repentance and Reformation, for any End of our Plagues? Can a Nation that will not be healed, think much to be destroy'd?

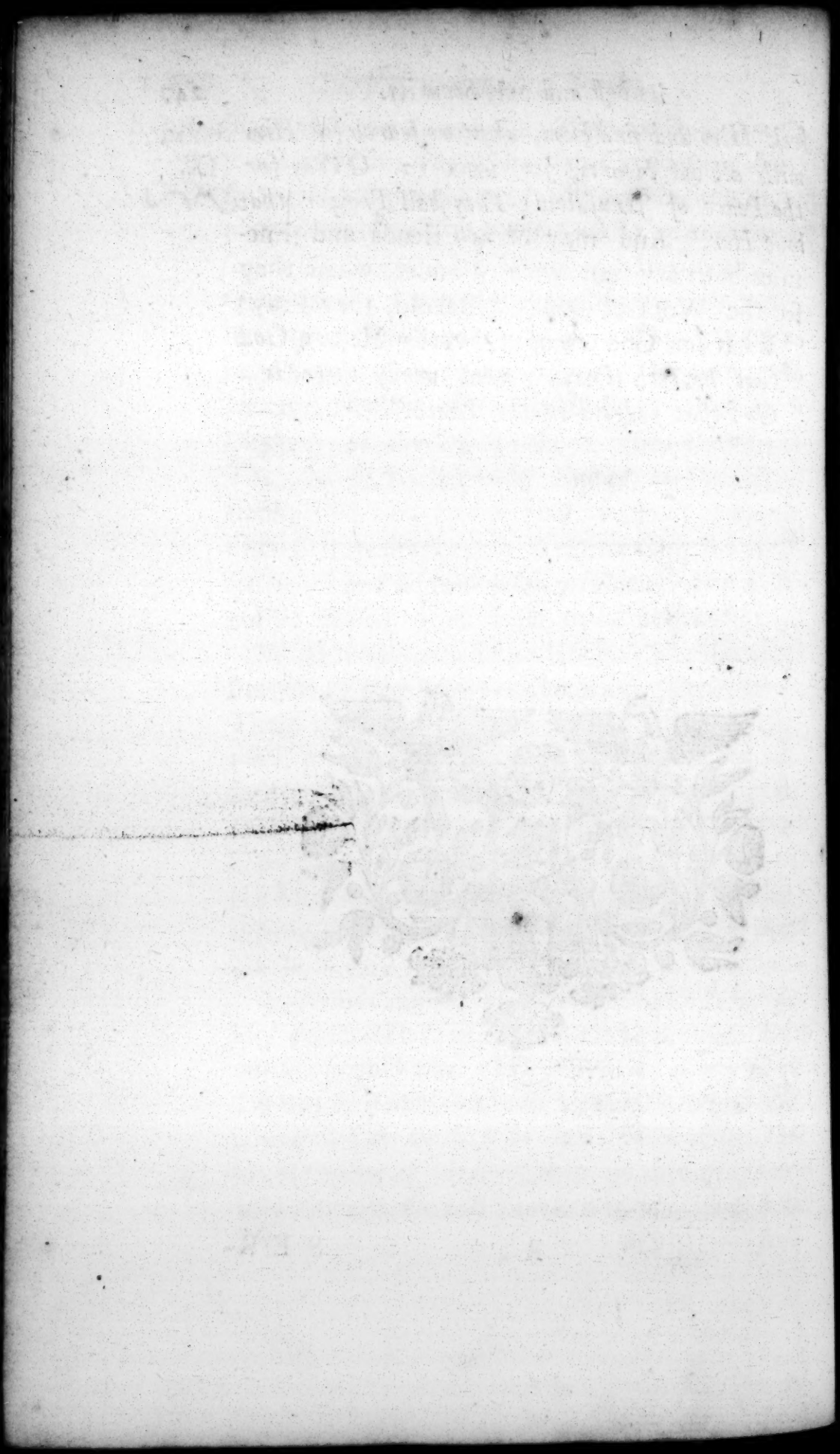
What now can help Us but the fervent Prayers of true Believers, reforming Penitents? These may do *much*; we can't positively say *what*, or whether they come too late to put off fore temporal Judgments: But this may be said, that *this* will do, if any thing will: But however, (let the Event be what it will as to the Publick) the sincere will in this method *deliver their own Souls, and their Labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.*

Let this Counsel be *acceptable* as it is *necessary* in this Day of our Lands Calamity, and our common Fears. *Let us seek the Lord while He may be found, and call upon Him whilst He is near.* Let us *humble our selves under the mighty Hand of God.* Let us go and pray unto Him and He *will* hearken to Us. *We shall seek*



*seek Him and find Him, when we search for Him* SERM.  
*with all our Hearts, Jer. xxix. 13. O Pray for IX.*  
*the Peace of Jerusalem; They shall Prosper that*  
*love Her. And may Sions Friends and Ene-*  
*mies both cry out with Wonder, when they*  
*see the Work of God; " Behold, they Pray!*  
*" What has God wrought? verily He is a God*  
*" that heareth Prayer; yea, verily there is a*  
*" God that judgeth in the Earth."*







# S E R M O N X.

The Removal of the R I G H T E O U S, or,  
Decaying Piety a Call for P R A Y E R.

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P S A L M XII. 1.

*Help Lord, for the Godly Man ceaseth ; for the  
Faithful fail from among the Children of Men.*

**T**H E S E are mournful Strains, and they too well suit our State and Circumstances at this Day. Our Lips may pronounce the Psalmists Words; O, that our Hearts were affected in the same Manner, (with the Prospects *We* have,) as *His* was. We are indeed fallen into degenerate Times: Many sad Instances We have of such as revolt from Religion, and of a great many others that are cold and languishing. May we not almost say, where is the Man that has the Honour and Purity of it near at Heart? There are many who have the outward Form; but is there not too much Reason to fear its no more than a Form?

S E R M.  
X.

And



SERM.

X. And while we are thus unhappily declining as to real and intrinsic Goodness, the Hand of God too is gone out against Us. Our offended Lord calls home his Servants from among Us one after Another; such as we can least spare, and from whom we had great Hopes they would do a *great deal* to support and maintain dying Religion in the World. But they who wou'd do God and his Cause Service and Honour, must not stay to do it. We are not worthy of their Assistance, though we much want it. This has a very dark and threatening Aspect upon Us; and it looks as if God were going to tare up our Fences, and throw us open that we shou'd be no longer an Inclosure; that is, as if He wou'd no longer support an Interest among Us for Himself.

And what makes our Case worse is, that few seem to be affected with this melancholly and terrible Situation of Things, or consider what is to be done for our Relief. Where are the Persons that are brought to their Knees and humbled before God? Who *stir up themselves to take Hold of Him*? Who lift up a Cry with the Psalmist, and say, *Help Lord*? They were bad Times He here speaks of; and that which made them so, was the Loss of good Men, and the Loss of Religion from among the People: This made the good Man pray for Succour: A Course that is equally necessary for Us, and wou'd no Doubt be as useful were it put in Practice. There is a great deal of Resemblance between

between *our* Times and *his*; and the same Method He took may very well suit Us: Let us tread his Steps, and with the same Spirit as He did, (with a deep Sense of the calamitous State into which we are fallen, and with earnest Desires and Expectations of Assistance from on high,) lift up the same Prayer, to Him with whom the *Residue of the Spirit* is; *Help Lord for the Godly Man ceaseth*, &c.

In these Words we have,

- I. An amiable Character represented to Us; *the Godly Man, the Faithful Man.*
- II. Here is a Circumstance very sad and sorrowful observed concerning them: *They cease and fail from among the Children of Men.* And,
- III. We have the Course which the Psalmist took hereupon: He prayed, *Help Lord.*

I. We have in the Words a very lovely and beautiful Character: *The Godly Man, the Faithful Man.* One and the same Person is here meant, though described by two distinct Epithets. Expositors are not perfectly agreed whether we are to understand by one of them, his conscientious Regard to the great God, and by the other his Carefulness to perform all the Duties He owes to his Fellow-Creatures; or whether by the former we are to take in all the Parts of his Duty both to God and Man, and

SERM. and by the latter his Sincerity and Upright-

X. ness in the discharge of his Duty both to the  
 one and the other: Nor is it very material  
 whether this Matter be adjusted or no: It will  
 come to one and the same Thing at last. We  
 shall at present take them asunder.

[1.] He is a *Godly Man*, who makes Conscience of doing all that He owes to the divine Majesty. He inwardly reveres, or stands in Awe of God, as a most glorious and terrible, a most perfect and excellent Being. He has a high Veneration and Esteem of Him, and He ardently and supremely loves Him. He acknowledges the divine Authority to be absolute and unlimited, and therefore without Reserve, He inwardly and outwardly submits Himself to all that God requires.

He also resigns Himself to the Disposals of Heaven, and is content that God should do with Him what he pleases. He desires above all Things to live in Communion with the Blessed God, to maintain a sacred Correspondence with Heaven by the Out goings of his Soul towards God, and by the descending Influences of his Holy Spirit upon Him. He endeavours after a likeness to God as that which is the Dignity and Glory of the humane Nature. He has a warm Concern to promote his Honour in the World; that is, He desires that God may be known and loved, obeyed and trusted by all reasonable Creatures; or that a Regard to Him may sway every One that is capable of Religion.



gion. He lays out himself to promote the Interest of God in the World: And by all this, He is endeavouring to get himself ready for an immediate Access to Him in the Regions of Glory, and for eternal Blessedness with Him. He enquires carefully what the Will of God is; and when He has informed himself of this, it sways more with Him than all other Considerations whatsoever. He will not venture the Loss of the divine Favour to gain the Favour of any Creature. He will neither be driven from Duty by the Anger, nor seduced from it by the Flatteries of Men. He yields up his Heart and all the Powers of his Soul, his Thoughts, Inclinations and Desires to the divine Government as well as all his outward Actions. He owns himself under higher Obligations to God; than He can be under to any Creature; and therefore God has his highest and first Regard, and He resolutely Sacrifices any thing for his Honour and Glory. And then,

[2.] He is *faithful* too: that is, He joins the Second-Table Duties to the First: As God has done in his Law, so does He in his Practice. He is Faithful: His Word of Promise is steady; and He reckons it strong and binding: He makes good what his Lips have uttered, though humane Laws compell Him not: He is conscientious in doing to every Man what He thinks He should reasonably desire others shou'd do towards Him, were the Tables turned: He is upright

SERM. upright in all his Transactions with Men, and

X. He is so in Obedience to God: He is not Honest and Just, because He is sure Honesty will best serve his Interest; but He is so in Instances wherein He knows it will be against Him, because God requires it. There is no true Genuine Godliness without Faithfulness to Men: He that is Faithful and Honest to Men from right Principles is so from the Fear and Love of God: A Reverence to divine Authority makes Him so: Every one that is Godly, or a faithful Servant of God will make Conscience of those Commands which respect Others. Which way soever the Command turns, He will shew himself a Subject by obeying it: *Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have Respect unto all thy Commandments,* Psal. cxix. 6.

Thus you have an Account of *the Godly and Faithful Man*. This was a rare Character in the Times of *David*, and is so still, more's the Pity.

II. Here is something very sad and sorrowful observed concerning Persons of this Character: *The Godly Man ceaseth, the Faithful fail*. Here I shall enquire,

[1.] When such Persons as these may be said to *fail* and *cease*. And,

[2.] Wherein the Case is so sorrowful a One.

[1.] When may the Faithful be said to *fail* and *the Godly cease*?

(1.) When

(1.) When great Numbers of them are taken away by Death. Good as well as Bad are alike exposed to the stroke of Death. That Faith which assures the Soul it shall not *die eternally*, does not secure from *temporal Death*: So the Apostle says expressly; *if Christ be in you the Body is dead because of Sin*: Though you are all Members of Jesus Christ, yet you must by the stroke of Death fall into the Dust of the Grave: But when many of these, and the greater Number in Proportion are removed out of our World, it looks like Gods contending with Us. Sometimes He *takes them away from the Evil to come*, Isa. lxvii. 1. It is not for nothing that Gods Hand is upon these: There is always some very great Reason for it; for we know, that *precious in the Sight of the Lord is the Death of his Saints*. Now this is a sad Case; for they are the *Salt of the Earth* that keep it sweet; and when *they* are taken away it looks ill upon the World from whence they are taken: God seems then to have a Controversy with it: May be, it has not honoured the Grace of God and his Image imprest upon the Saints; but rather looked upon them with an envious Eye and malignant Heart, because they were so far superiour to others in Piety and Vertue. And besides this, we have fewer Intercessors with Heaven to stand in the Gap and keep Judgments from breaking in upon Us; fewer to encourage and strengthen the Hands of the Saints; fewer Persons for whom it is worth while to maintain



SERM. tain the Gospel in the World and Church, and

X. to support the World it self. And as there are  
 in the best Circumstances but few of this sort ;  
 so when great Numbers of these are called a-  
 way, it must give good Men a great deal of  
 uneasy Concern and fill them with boding and  
 dismal Apprehensions. *Help Lord for the God-  
 ly cease, and the Faithful fail.*

(2) When many become degenerate and turn  
 aside: When great Numbers of those concern-  
 ing whom we hoped well, that were looking  
 towards God and Heaven, seem to have lost all  
 Concern about these Things; they that used to  
*ask the way to Sion with their Faces thither-ward,*  
 are now courting their Gain and Pleasure; they  
 that used to converse with the Word of God  
 throw it aside; and they who once studied good  
 Books are turned away after Vanity; When  
 they that made Conscience of praying alone  
 give it over; and they who were Conscienti-  
 ous what they thought and spoke, now let their  
 Hearts and Tongues grow loose and ungovern'd,  
 and say any thing that Lust or Rage suggests:  
 When Persons desert that good Company they  
 used to join themselves with, and Taverns and  
 Places of Diversion are frequented more, and  
 the House of God less than it was: When of  
 constant Hearers they are become only After-  
 noon-Hearers; or, it may be, attend the House  
 of God but once a Month: When they that  
 used with Solemnity to prepare their Spirits  
 for the House of God, now come and go in a  
 careless

careless Manner: When they, who had Con-  
 victions of Sin upon their Minds and dreadful  
 Apprehensions of the Wrath of God due to it,  
 begin to make light of it and give over mourn-  
 ing, nay make a jest of it: When their Care  
 about the Salvation of their Souls is turned in-  
 to another Channel; into Enquiries how they  
 may please the Flesh, and how they may raise  
 themselves in the World: When they, who ob-  
 served Lord's Days with Care, are now wretch-  
 edly negligent of them: When they, who  
 taught their Children and Servants, and prayed  
 with 'em, and went before 'em in the Ways of  
 God, now suffer 'em to run wild and wicked,  
 without any Care what becomes of their Souls:  
 When the Worship of God which was regular-  
 ly and seriously kept up in Families, is either  
 entirely or very much left off; and there is  
 nothing done for God in those Houses where He  
 had once an *Altar erected to his Honour*: When  
 Conversation is filled with Railing, Tale-bear-  
 ing and Censures, and these are come in the  
 Place of Christian and serious Converse: When,  
 instead of the Shew and Appearance of Godli-  
 ness (which at least is an outward Decency)  
 there is all manner of vile irreligious Customs  
 and Practices breaking in upon Us. I say, when  
 this is the Case, it may be truly said, that the  
*Godly cease, the Faithful fail.*

(3.) When few come up to take the Places  
 of them that are removed; then we may say,  
 the *Godly cease*, &c. When the Spirit of God  
 seems to be greatly withdrawn from a professing

S

People:

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SERM. People: When his Breathings are not felt as

X. usual in his House and Ordinances: When  
 ~~~~~ Souls are not aspiring after 'em, and can be  
 very contented and easy without 'em: When
 young and tender Minds are not imprest by the
 Word, and formed to serious Godliness; but as
 they grow up in Years, grow up in Vanity
 and Sin: When they, from whom we might
 hope for a supply of Church Members to bear
 up the Cause of God in the World, seem to
 have quite another Turn of Mind: Their Spi-
 rits are gay and airy, or are turn'd only for
 Care and Business, as if they had nothing else
 to do but to Eat and Drink and Dress, and
 to get and keep this World: When their whole
 Time and Minds are taken up either with the
 Trifles or Hurries of Life, and there are few
 that look earnestly towards God, that see the
 State of their Souls by Nature, and are con-
 cerned how they may be redeem'd by Grace
 and saved from everlasting Wrath: When we
 see few grave Countenances and serious Minds;
 few awakened to a Sense of the Misery of their
 unconverted State, their Danger, and their
 Need of a Saviour; and when those who have
 passed that hopeful Season of Life wherein the
 Spirit of God ordinarily works upon the Mind,
 and are in a dull Form of Religion without a
 Change of Heart, go on santering and secure
 like the Horse in the Mill, and make no Ad-
 vances towards vital Christianity: When they,
 who had something like a *Grain of Mustard-Seed*,
 continue

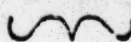
continue Weak and Children in Knowledge, SERM.
Faith, Love and every Grace; and are like, X.
what the Prophet says of *Ephraim, an unwise*
Son that stay'd long in the Place of the breaking
forth of Children, Hof. xiii. 13.

(4.) When the Generality of Men are of the opposite Character. When we take a wide View round us, and can see but here and there an Instance of true Religion: When Persons of a serious Spirit are so few that we are ready to cry out, *Righteousness hath forsaken the Earth*: When our Case is such that we have but, as it were, *One of a City and two of a Tribe*, a very small Remnant that God takes to bring unto his *Sion*: Or, according to that fine Description of the Prophet, when the good Men that are left in the Land are like the *Gleaning of a Vine or Olive-Tree* after the main Crop is gather'd, that is, but few, very few in number, *Isa. xvii. 6.*

And, while we can hardly see a Man that appears to have a Concern for God upon Him, we are at the same Time surrounded with those who have upon them the plain Marks of his Enemies: They are *ungodly*, Neglecters of God, and appear to have no Concern at all about the Honour of God: They are *Prophane* and Contemners of God: They do those Things that are apparently most contrary to his holy Nature and Will.

And again, while we see on the one Hand Blasphemers of the Name of God, prophane

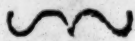
SERM. and dreadful Swearers who use that tremendous

X. Name with all Irreverence and Contempt;  we see also, *on the other Hand*, such as despise the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, or throw away and condemn the Light and Grace thereof. If here we see the riotous and unclean, the unjust and the injurious, the Liars and the Uncharitable; we see elsewhere the grossly ignorant and worldly-minded, many who know nothing of a Redeemer and Sanctifier, and many who are set upon this present World, limited to it, make it their Portion, and only *mind earthly Things*.

Now, if these be the Characters of the most, it may be truly said, (as in the Text) *The Godly Man ceaseth, and the Righteous fail from among the Children of Men*. I now proceed to shew,

[2.] Wherein this Case is so sorrowful a One. It is so,

(1.) Because the divine Majesty is exceedingly affronted and dishonour'd. Is it not a sorrowful Sight to see the most high God whom Angels adore love and worship contemned by poor silly Worms? His Name trampled upon, his Laws made nothing of, and his Grace too despised? Must it not be grievous to a Mind that is in a right Frame to see such glorious Excellencies and Perfections undervalued by such poor wicked Wretches? That they who have received their Beings from God shou'd shew such disrespect to Him and Enmity against Him?

Him? Nay, shou'd be disaffected to that God SERM.
X.
by whose Goodness they are preserved from
Hell. 

And, as it is very sad to see this in any single Instance, it's much more so to see it the general prevailing Temper of Mankind: That they shou'd as it were rise up in Confederacy and Rebel against God; join with Hell to break his Laws, throw off his Government, and neglect all his kind Measures for their Relief: That they shou'd generally combine to make his Mercies the Instruments of *their* Sin and *his* Dishonour; and give themselves over to the Service of Satan and hurtful Lusts. This pierces the Hearts of good Men with many Sorrows: Who must not grieve to see a Father and a Friend treated thus by a worthless Mifcreant to whom He has been always shewing the greatest Kindness? And yet this, worse than this, is the Temper and Carriage of Sinners towards the great God: The Apostle tells us, that the *Heart of righteous Lot was vexed with the filthy Conversation of the wicked in his Days*, 2 Pet. ii. 7. And must it not be exceedingly afflictive, to observe Sinners so generally setting the great God at Defiance, as though He had no Power to resent their Crimes, or do himself Justice? That, whilst Devils tremble at the Thoughts of his Righteousness and Vengeance, They shou'd be daring Him to his Face, and *run as it were upon his Neck, even upon the thick Bosses of his Bucklers*: Job xv. 26.

SERM.

X.

(2.) Another thing that makes this a sorrowful Case is, that the Servants of God then meet with greater Difficulties and Discouragements in the Ways of Religion. I need not tell a great many of you, that it is with much struggle a Christians Work is perform'd even when Circumstances are most favourable: We must all *strive to enter in at the strait Gate: The Flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and our Adversary the Devil goes about as a roaring Lion seeking whom He may devour*: But when the general stream of Mankind beats strong against the Saint, it makes his Work much harder: When he sees the whole World almost going the contrary Way, and endeavouring to trail Him on; this damps his Spirits; sinful Shame, Fear or Mistrust makes Him attend upon his Duty with more Reluctance and Difficulty: It's hard Work for Him to stand alone for God and be single in his Cause: And though He is resolved to do it; yet this Circumstance very much encreases his Conflict: If he can *sometimes* do it with Ease and Chearfulness it is not *always* so: He is surrounded with prosperous Wickedness, and sees some Instances of Eminent Goodness greatly afflicted; and this is sometimes a staggering Temptation to him: He meets with many a Reproach, Sneer and Censure upon the Account of his singularity in Religion, especially when his outward Circumstances may be adverse, or inferiour to those of others.

(3.) It

(3.) It is a very sorrowful Time then be- SERM.
cause great Numbers of Souls are daily ruined. X.

Sinners in Multitudes draw one Another to greater Lengths in Wickedness: They encourage and harden one anothers Hearts against all Thoughts of reforming, till a Sense of God and all Regard to Conscience is quite extinguish'd and lost: Nor have they in such Circumstances those Examples and Rebukes on every side that might lead them to think, and assist 'em in reflecting upon themselves: And thus they live and die in a state of Impenitence: Death surprizes them in a secure and thoughtless Posture, and the Flames of divine Vengeance seize upon 'em. O, think what a Trouble it must be to a good Man to see one of his Fellow Creatures lost for ever; especially, when He is forced to think so (if he think at all) of those with whom he was acquainted, or to whom he stood more intimately related in the Bonds of Nature, Affinity or Friendship.

(4.) Such Times as these must be very sad, because dreadful Judgments must be supposed very near. What else can be expected, than that God shou'd *walk contrary to that People that walk contrary to Him?* And if *Judgment begin at the House of God, where shall the wicked and ungodly appear?* Indeed, when the Saints are removed out of a Place there the People seem to be ripe for Ruin: There is nothing left among 'em that is worth the divine Protection: And, when He calls his

SERM. own People aside, He then makes a Way for
 X. his Anger: It is like *Lot's Removal out of So-*
 dom; concerning whom God said, He cou'd
 do nothing till He was gone: *Gen. xix. 22.*
 Well may we suppose dreadful Judgments near,
 when all are sinning and none returning, when
 all are provoking God to Wrath and none are
 crying for Mercy: May not such a People ex-
 pect and fear that their *Plagues will be wonder-*
ful; that God will visit for these Things, and
lay them waste with the Fire of his Anger? Cer-
 tainly, where the Cry of Iniquity is exceed-
 ing loud on all Hands, and at the same Time
 there is no Intercessor, or very few who have
 any Interest in God; the State of a People
 must be very Deplorable.

(5) In this Case the entire Loss of Religion
 and all that is good is much to be feared.
 When *Israel* was become generally corrupt,
 then we find they were *carried away Captive*
into a strange Land: Their Temple was burnt:
 Their Privileges as Gods peculiar People were
 in a great Measure taken away. And after-
 wards, when God had wonderfully restored
 them, and they revolted again, and filled up
 the Measure of their Iniquities; then their Tem-
 ple and City it self were taken, and they re-
 main untill this Day a fearful Instance of di-
 vine Vengeance. When the *Asiatick Churches*
 were declined, Christ bids them repent and do
 their first Works, else (He tells 'em that) He
 wou'd *come unto them quickly, and fight against*
them

them with the Sword of his Mouth: Rev. ii. 16. They disregarded his Warning, and were therefore soon after cast out of his Favour: We have now but some obscure Footsteps of the Places where those Churches once flourished, and the Marks of divine Wrath are visible upon them even until now.

And, Christians, have *We* any Reason to expect Gospel-Light shou'd be continued to shine among Us, when we disregard it and abuse it? When it is to us as if it were not: for so it is, when we make no good Use of it: Why shou'd the Gospel of Jesus be in our Hands and we have the Hearts and lead the Lives of Heathens, or worse than theirs? Certainly we have very little if any Reason to expect the Continuance of it: And on this as well as other Accounts such a state of Things must be very grievous and afflicting to a good Man.

Having thus shewn wherein this Case is so sorrowful a One, I proceed to observe,

III. The Course which the Good Man took hereupon. He prayed, *Help Lord*. This was the only Way He cou'd take, and it was a very wise One. I wou'd here enquire

[1.] What the Help was that He desired, And then shew,

[2.] That Prayer is the properest Course to be taken in such a Case.

[1.] What Help was it that the *Psalmist* here desired?

(1.) He

SERM. (1.) He desired that God wou'd help to preserve the remaining few that *were* good:

X. *That He wou'd help to preserve them alive, that they might be saved from the Hands of Violence, and not be rooted out of the Earth. He saw the wicked plot against the just, and gnash upon Him with his Teeth; and therefore he prayed, that God wou'd make the Wrath of Man to praise Him, and that the Remainder thereof He wou'd restrain: Help Lord: keep these ravenous Beasts of Prey in; hold them in due Bounds, or else the Name and Memorial of thy People must Perish: But art not thou a little Sanctuary to thy Saints? Bid 'em then to enter into their Chambers: Cover them with the shadow of thy Wings: Make 'em the Objects of thy special Care and Love, or else they will be quite extirpated and lost: Thou canst save in a Den of Lions, or in a Furnace of Fire. O magnify thy Power and Grace in their Preservation: Espouse their Cause: Vindicate their Innocence; and suffer none to do them Harm. Make it to appear that they are thy People, thy chosen Ones; and let their Lives be precious in thy Sight: Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver; O Lord, make haste to help 'em under all their Fears and Dangers from the Threats or Violence of wicked Men: Help thy Servants that they may live, and so preserve the remaining few.*

Or, Help 'em to hold fast their Integrity in such shaking Times as these. Suffer 'em not to be

be tempted above what thou wilt enable them to bear: Guard their Hearts from the Infection of evil Practice and evil Company: Set their Feet upon a Rock, and let 'em not turn aside to crooked Paths: Make them valiant for thy Truth in the Earth; and enable them to resolve, and fix the Resolution deep in their own Souls, that whatever others do, they will serve the Lord: Let not the Business or Advantages of this World, the Society or Pleasures of it entice them from thy Service; nor Reproach and Scorn fright 'em into a Compliance with Sin: Help them to adorn Religion by an eminent Zeal for God, and exemplary Holiness in all manner of Conversation: The more outrageous and resolved Sinners are upon their Lusts, the more resolutely may they practice the opposite Virtues, and bear their Testimony to Religion as publickly as they can: Let the Zeal which others shew in Wickedness, whet their Spirits for thy Cause and Interest; excite 'em to labour more earnestly, and exert themselves with greater Vigour in it. While others Glory in their Sin and Shame, let them glory in this, that they are the devoted Servants of the Lord Christ: While the Wickedness of others appears in broad Day-Light, let their Graces Shine in all their Force and Beauty; that the Sinner may be ashamed of his Lusts which are poor, mean and base Things, and be convinced that the Service of God is the greatest, best and most honourable Thing the humane Nature is Capable of.

SERM.

X.

(2) When

SERM. (2.) When the Psalmist says, *Help Lord, He*

X. may be supposed to pray that God wou'd raise up others to support, maintain and honour his Cause in the World besides those that are now living: That He wou'd *pour Water upon Him that is thirsty, and Floods upon the Dry Ground:* That He wou'd *pour out his Spirit upon our Seed, and his Blessing upon our Off-spring:* That He wou'd touch the Hearts of great Numbers with a Sense of himself and their Duty to Him; kindle the Principles of Faith and Love in their Souls; and make 'em look after Him, aspire towards Him, and draw them effectually to Himself as with the *Cords of Love and Bands of a Man:* That he wou'd rescue them from the Power of Sin, break off the Chains of Satan, and make them his glorious Free-men: That he wou'd set their Designs and Purposes right, and put them into the Way in which he wou'd have 'em go: That he wou'd make them his own, impress his Image upon them, and put them among his Children: That he wou'd Spirit them for his Service, and make them a People for his Praise; that they who never before were acquainted with him, may rise up for Him against the Evil-doers, espouse his Interest, and walk in his Ways: That there may be many who shall ask with Concern, how they may please God, how they may be Safe and Happy in his Favour; and that great Numbers may *bear and believe and turn unto the Lord.*

(3.) He

(3.) He desired that God wou'd retrieve the dying Power of Godliness, and make those who are become lukewarm *fervent in Spirit serving the Lord*. That the living Principles of Faith and Love may diffuse their Force and Virtue through all the Powers of their Souls, and every Part of their Conversation: That He wou'd move the Spirits of them who are sunk into Indifferency, that they may be *Valiant for the Truth*, behave well and upon the best Principles like *good Soldiers of Jesus Christ*: That from a Principle of Grace reigning in the Heart, Influences may be shed through all their Lives: That they may not only wear the Name of Christians, but have a deep and governing Sense of Religion upon their Minds: That with the Form of Godliness Men may have the Power of it: And that this may appear to command 'em at all Times, and in all Cases: That they may walk circumspectly, and adorn Religion by a holy exemplary and well ordered Conversation: That they who make a Profession of it, may have Grace answerable to it, *Holiness to the Lord* written both upon their Hearts and Lives: That as Christianity is a glorious Name, so it may appear to be a glorious Thing by them who profess it, *shewing forth the Praises of Him who hath called them out of Darkness into his marvellous Light*.

I come

SERM.

X.

I come now to shew that, in the next Place,
 [2.] This is a very proper Course for a good
 Man to take in such a state of Things: for,

(1.) God, and none but He, *can* afford Help in this Case; and therefore He shou'd be sought unto for it. He is the *Father of Lights*, and the *Author of every good and perfect Gift*: *None can come to Christ except the Father draw Him*: It is the Work of God to enlighten a dark Mind, to soften a hard Heart, to awaken a drowsy Conscience, to subdue a proud and rebellious Will, and to make Men who are under the Power of Sin truly Religious: It is his Prerogative to break the Dominion of Lusts, and to make us a *willing obedient People*: It belongs to him to awaken the dormant habits of Grace, and to bring back his declining and drowsy People: He gives Life to the dead Sinner, and makes the sleepy Saint bestir himself.

(2.) Prayer is a proper Means of obtaining that Help which God only can afford. He has made himself known to Us as a God that heareth Prayer: And, when He promises his People a new Heart, He says, *for this will I be enquired of by the House of Israel, to do it for them*: Ezek. xxxvi. 37. It is fit we shou'd own our Dependence upon him for every thing we have or hope for. He has erected a Throne of Grace, and appointed a Mediator to present and commend our Offerings unto Him. He has also given his Spirit to assist us, and assured us that the *Prayer of the Upright is his Delight*, He has

has bid us ask that we may receive, and seek that we may find; and though our utmost Fer- vency deserves nothing from Him; yet we must pray that our own Insufficiency may be better known, and we better disposed to give God the Glory of the good Things he does for Us. This is the Means God has expressly appointed for our Relief and Succour: *Call upon me in the Day of Trouble; I will deliver Thee, and thou shalt glorify me:* Psal. l. 15. So, we are bid to *pour out our Hearts before God* for He is a *Refuge for Us:* Psal. lxii. 8. Now, God's Appointments are not in vain; He has put great Honour upon the Prayers of his People: And when we are thus humbly seeking Mercy from Him, we are in the best Temper that Creatures can be in to receive it; and are best prepared to improve the Blessing to Gods Honour when it is bestowed.

I M P R O V E M E N T.

(1.) Let us Lament it that this is so much our Case at this Day. Do not the Godly cease, and the Faithful fail from among Us? How many of those that were serious and good, that were form'd to have pleaded the Cause of God and Religion in the World, are removed from us by the stroke of Death? How many also are degenerated and turn'd aside? *They begun well but something or other has hinder'd them:* They were looking towards the God that made 'em, and the Heaven they were made for; but now their

SERM. their Eyes are downward; they are groveling
 X. upon the Earth, and panting after the Dust of
 it, or they are wallowing in sensual Pleasures:

How many, concerning whom we had once good Hopes, are now gone off? And how few come up to take their Places? How few of those that are young enter into a Course of strict and serious Godliness? Nay, how many are by the vain Entertainments of giddy thoughtless Youth carried down the Stream of Pleasure, or else devoured with earthly Cares? How few say, *where is God my Maker?* And of those who have been so long in the Church of God, and made a florid Profession, how few are truly Serious? The Generality of those we see and converse with in the World are not *the Godly, the Faithful*, but of the opposite Character. Hereupon,

(2.) Let us betake our selves to fervent Prayer, as the Psalmist did. Let us wrestle with God who has the *Hearts of all Men in his Hands*, and *can turn them as the Rivers of Waters which way He pleases*: Let us unburden our Hearts at the Mercy Seat, and spread before God all our Complaints and Sorrows. Were there more such Intercessors as these in the Text, and they more earnest at the Throne of Grace, there wou'd be some Hope concerning Us: It wou'd argue something of the divine Life in Us, that the Spirit of God is at Work upon Us, and give us some hopeful Symptoms that there wou'd soon be a Revival of Religion

gion in the midst of Us: This wou'd shew SERM.
some Concern for Gods Honour, some Love to X.
his Cause, and tender Affection to Mankind. 

Let us try whether the united Prayer of Faith will not avail much in such a Case as this.

(3.) Let us also *do* whatever we can in our several Places to procure Help. Prayer without Endeavour is like *Rachel*, Beautiful, but Barren. God expects that while we pray to Him for Mercy, we shou'd be using the Means He has appointed. Let us *search and try our Ways*, and endeavour to reform our selves; Persons apart and Families apart. We cannot but see what is grievous in the World about us; but let not our Eyes be always roving Abroad: Let us turn inward, look into *our own Hearts*, consider what is their Temper, and what reigns there; what is amiss, and how it may be reformed; and from thence let us look into *our Conversations*, and endeavour that what is amiss *there* may be set right: Let those of us also that are placed over *Families* look into *them*, and consider what we may and ought to do there for the Revival of decaying Godliness. Are not Children and Servants to be prayed with and prayed for? To be taught and instructed in the Things of God? To be seriously and faithfully dealt with? and to have Religion recommended to them by our own exemplary Practice of it? Are they not to be acquainted what they came into the World about, what they are to do in it, whither they are going, and

T

SERM. and how it is like to fare with 'em for ever?

X. Shou'd they not be informed of the Corruption of their Natures, the Necessity of renewing Grace, and have the Beauty and Excellence of the Saviour represented to them that they may be induced to accept of Him?

Shou'd we not go further, and *imitate the Faithful* whom we have known? Let us consider Religion as it was transcribed in their Lives; how it appear'd, how it burned, and under what Advantage it shone in every Part of their Conversation: And (as much as in us lies) let Us go, and be, and do likewise. Further, let us not only commend and imitate those that are *Dead*, but associate with and Honour the *Living Saints*: *As Iron sharpens Iron, so a Man the Countenance of his Friend. I am a Companion,* says the Psalmist, *of all them that fear Thee,* Psal. cxix. 63 Let us frequently converse with them, especially about the Things of Religion,) as *the excellent Ones on the Earth, in whom is all our Delight.*

Lastly, Let us be particularly earnest with God for the Effusion of his Spirit upon Us. He seems to withdraw; and that is the Calamity of our Day: We are not enough sensible of his Retreat; nor do We cry after it as those that are convinced his Return is necessary for the Preservation of any thing that is good among Us: Let us be earnest with God that He wou'd send down his Spirit, as a Spirit

Spirit of Illumination and Conviction, a con-
verting, quickening, strengthening, confirm-
ing Spirit: That He may be found so to *Us*
in our Attendance upon Ordinances, and to
all those that shall join with *Us*. While we
thus lift up our Cry, we may hope for his Re-
turn; that He will revive the languishing
Interests of Religion amongst *Us*, and raise
up a *Seed to serve Him*, even such as He will
account for a *Generation*.

SERM.
X.



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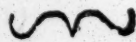


S E R M O N XI.

The Deplorable State of a P E O P L E, or N A -
T I O N where Iniquity Abounds.

I S A I A H I. 4.

Ah sinful Nation, a People laden with Iniquity.

YOU are all, I doubt not, very sensible that SERM.
a deep and piercing Conviction of Sin XI.
must ever precede a right Humiliation for it: 
But we cannot mourn for the Sins we don't
know, or never think of: And such is the Pride
and Partiality of corrupted Nature, that we
are hardly brought to think of Sin, unless we
are plainly and faithfully admonish'd of it:
And till we see our Guilt is crying, we think
of it with little Concern: The Heart will not
melt or break for Sin till it apprehends some-
thing of its odious Nature, aggravating Circum-
stances, and the extreme Danger it brings us
into. Till the Heart is thus struck with the

SERM. Impression, we shall find little Indignation against it, Abhorrence of it, or serious Purpose to forsake and leave it.

~ XI. This State *I*srael was in at the Time when the Prophet brought this Message to them: We find Him addressing them in a more oblique Manner, (v. 2.) where He calls to the inanimate World, the *Heavens and the Earth*, as if He had more Hopes of any Thing hearing Him than this People: This was an artful way of striking them with the greater Force, and representing to them their dreadful stupidity and worse than brutal Senselessness of their own Case: *Hear, O Heavens, and give Ear, O Earth*: There is no Hope of *I*sraels hearing: We may as well cry to the *Rocks*, as well call upon the *Moon and Stars* as call upon them.

And in the next Verse He represents their Case to be worse, and their stupidity greater (if possible) than the most Senseless Part of the animal World: *The Ox knoweth his Owner, and the Ass his Masters Crib: But ISRAEL doth not know, MY PEOPLE doth not consider: The I*srael of God; that have had such great Things wrought for them, and have been taught so plainly the excellent and important Things of Religion: *My People*; who wear the Badge of my Covenant, have long been treated as my own, have been the Darlings of my Providence, and a constant Expence to me: *THESE* have not *known*, nor *considered*. And then He breaks forth in this pathetick mournful style;
Ab

Ah Sinful Nation, a People laden with Iniquity: SERM.

As if their Case was now such that there was XI.
nothing to be done for them, but to weep over
them.

I shall endeavour to improve this Part of
Holy Writ in inquiring,

I. When a *Nation* or *People* may so emphatically be called a *Sinful Nation*, a *People laden with Iniquity*.

II. I would also shew that this is a Case truly piteous, and what shou'd be seriously lamented. *AH sinful Nation, &c.* And then conclude with some practical Remarks upon the whole.

I. I am to shew when a *Nation* or *People* may so emphatically be called, a *Sinful Nation*, a *People laden with Iniquity*. Now, this is the Case, when all manner of Crimes are committed, and the People don't stand clear of any sort of Offences whatsoever; when the Infection is not confined to one Rank or Order of Men, but has diffused it self through the whole Body of the People; when those few, who have any Appearance of Seriousness, have yet a great many Things very much amiss in them; and when these Sins are all heighten'd with many provoking and aggravating Circumstances: I say, when this is the Case, it may be truly said of a *Nation* or *People*: *Ah Sinful Nation,*

SERM. *a People laden with Iniquity.* I shall speak a

XI. little distinctly to each of these:

~~~~~ (1.) When all manner of Crimes are committed, and the People don't stand clear of any sort of Offences: It's sad indeed to observe any People generally under the Influence of one *single* Lust; but it's much more so when they act as Slaves to all that's Evil: When they behave as if every Thing were desirable and pleasant, whereby the great and Holy God cou'd be offended: When Sin is, as it were, their Trade and Business, and they are ready to comply with every Temptation to it: When they live as if they wanted Opportunities for sinning, and were resolved to lay hold of all that lie in their Way: When you cannot turn your Eyes on *any* Side, but you are offended with the sight of some Provocation or other done to the great God, and your Ears are grated with the most prophane and offensive Sounds: When one part of the Nation is turning Infidels, and the Principles of Atheism spread themselves with Triumph amongst Men: [This indeed is a *Compendium* of all manner of Iniquity; for when Atheism like a Flood-gate, is opened, every thing else that is terrible and threatening breaks in upon a Nation and overflows it:] And is not this our Case? Are not the Being and Perfections of the blessed God disowned by some, whilst others deny Him the Government of the World that He has made and sustains? Vigorous and unwearied

wearied Endeavours are also used to explode the Gospel of Jesus, and all the Arts of Sophistry and Buffoonery are employed to bring it into Contempt. His sacred Person and Offices are treated with Scorn, and his Doctrine represented as no better than the glimmering Light of Nature, or what the Heathen Philosophers formerly taught us. The Gospel is reckoned amongst them as no better than a cunningly devised Fable, and the Evidence of it treated as fit to be received by none but Fools, or Bigots.

Moreover, when Men take a hellish Pleasure in endeavouring to shame others with the most daring Jests and Banters upon Things most sacred and awful, and value themselves upon an Ability to set the Religion of Jesus in a Light wherein they can make a Jest of it, and then with a very daring Impudence perswade you they have proved it an Imposture: When the Press is groaning under Productions of this sort, and Men are indefatigable to turn others from the Faith, and make Profelytes to, (what shall I call it) worse than Heathenism: [Thus they catch the poor giddy unthinking Youth, whose warm Inclinations to sensual Pleasures make them eager to have a loose given them, and the Restraints of the Laws of God removed: They are glad to see themselves at Liberty, to walk in the Way of their own Hearts, and in the sight of their own Eyes, without the cutting Thought that God will afterwards bring them into Judgment.] And

SERM.

XI.

And while some are denying the Being of a God, and throwing the Religion of Jesus out of the World directly ; others are swearing loud, and deeply prophaning the great and dreadful Name of God with most horrid Oaths and Ex-  
 ecutions. How strong a Tincture of Hell doth this carry with it, more perhaps than any other Sin? This rises like a steam out of the bottomless Pit, and looks like sinning for sinnings Sake, since neither Pleasure nor Profit attend it. You cannot stir abroad without hearing this tremendous Name thrown to and fro, as if there was nothing awful or sacred in it. From all Quarters the most horrid and shocking Ex-  
 ecutions are belched out, and all the Forms of Speech are common among Men, which we might suppose Devils themselves would use were they to converse on Earth ; and all this is done, with as much, if not more Hardness and Unconcernedness than the damned Spirits themselves could possibly attain to. Are not the most frightful and astonishing things thrown up in the vilest Prophaneation of the Blood and Wounds of our dearest Lord ? and the most solemn Things treated as if there was nothing awful or valuable in them? The *Tongues* of Men are thus *set on Fire by Hell*, and almost all our Conversations are tinged with Language of this Sort.

Nay, what makes the Prospect more melancholly and piercing is, that the Infection has reached the *other Sex*, whose Modesty teaches them to glory in another Way of Speaking ;  
 and



and Children who have not learned to speak plain, can yet with a dreadful Degree of Plainness vilify the awful Name of God. Mens Inventions are upon the Rack (not content with the old Forms of Oaths) to find out something new, some sounds of Horror that our Ears are yet unacquainted with. They emulate each other in damning, as if they were afraid they shou'd not sink deep, or soon enough into the bottomless Pit. With what Madness will they call upon their Maker to damn their Souls and their Blood? But remember, Sinner, (if there be any such here) it will not be long e'er the great God will vindicate the Glory of his Name: Stay a while, and He will accomplish all the Wishes of thy Heart: He will answer the Prayers thou hast impiously offered to Him, and thy Soul shall have a *terrible* Return. The Thunder now murmurs to fly against the daring Wretch, and Devils wait with impatient Eagerness to seize upon Him. You have often bid 'em take your selves and your Friends; they wait but an Order from God, and then they *will* do it, as soon as ever they are let loose.

The Prophanation of the Day of God, and the Neglect of publick Worship, is another Offence that has sadly obtained amongst Us: Many are ready to say, with the *Jews* of Old, *when will the Sabbath be gone?* And of God's House and Worship, *what a Weariness is it?* How often is the Day spent in Idleness, or else devoted to carnal Pleasures and sinful Diversions,

SERM. fions, as if it were a general Release from the

XI. Service of God, for Men to do or say what-  
 ever they pleased without Restraint or Fear?

[Many of those who have fallen Sacrifices to the Hands of publick Justice having owned, the Beginning of their Transgressions were dated from the Prophanation of that Day.] Is not this a Season amongst many, when any Person may have your Company, when any Business or Affair whatever may have your Thoughts? But God and your own Souls, and the great End for which the Day was instituted seldom come in Mind. Many cannot rise to attend the House of God, or can do it but once a Day: And when they are there, they partly gaze and doze away the Time, adding the Sin of Hypocrisy to all the rest. There's no conversing with their own Hearts, nor with the Word of God: Nothing done for Families, for Children, and Servants, to instruct them in the *Way of the Lord*.

Besides this, Intemperance is another Sin that has spread it self into all the Corners of our Land: And many are become so favourable in their Censures of it, that they can almost pronounce their Friends and Acquaintance good Christians, though frequently overtaken with brutal and shameful Excesses. But, Sirs, We must tell you plainly that *our Gospel* knows no such Christians; and, sure I am, the *Apostle* has taught us to reckon those among the *car-nal*, who are expressly shut out of the *King-dom*

dom of God, Gal. v. 21. The Excesses and Debaucheries of our Land are such as maintain vast Numbers of Families in Idleness. Is it not too common in visiting and entertaining of Friends, to have a Design to *unman* each other? A Person is scarce thought *civil* to his Neighbour, who will not be drunk in Complaisance to Him: And He has no good Manners who will not sacrifice his Reason and Conscience, and make himself worse than a Beast. Are there not Multitudes who *rise up early in the Morning that they may follow strong Drink; that continue untill Night, till Wine inflame them?* As if it were an Excellence, to be *mighty to drink Wine, and Men of Strength to mingle strong Drink*, Isa. v. 11, 22. For this, a *Woe* was pronounced against the *Drunkards of Ephraim*, and now hangs over the *Drunkards of Great Britain*. How many Constitutions have been overthrown, and broke in Pieces by this Means? How many have drowned the Faculties of the Mind, impaired their Estates, and reduced their Families to Want and Beggery.

Lewdness and Uncleaness are become epidemical Distempers among us; and, if the World be not misinformed in the Case, the House of God it self is resorted to with a Design for carrying on Intrigues: Nor must we wonder to see Lewdness obtain, when those notorious Factors for Hell, I mean the Players, are so generally allowed of and encouraged. Let *those* take the shame of attending the Play-House from



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from Time to Time, to whom the shame belongs. It's a sorrowful Circumstance, that such Things should be among our selves; but, as they are true, you *ought* to hear of them. It's well if those, who can with so much ease of Mind and Pleasure resort there, don't take the next bold Step to *run with them to the same excess of Riot*. How little soever you may apprehend or dread such a Circumstance, the Way is down-hill and steep like a Precipice, and your going there is taking the first Step on the Edge of it: Whether you can stop or no afterwards judge Ye. It's terrible to hear of the dreadful Tragedies that are acted under the Influence of those brutal Passions to which Men have abandoned themselves to such a shameful Degree.

But I wou'd gladly close this dreadful Scene; It wou'd be endless to reckon up all those Particulars, which constitute a Nation Sinful in this emphatical Sense: But, where those I have mentioned are commonly found, its too certain that all the Bands of Darknes will rendezvous there. Wherever *prophane* Swearing is, there *will* be *false* Swearing if a Temptation offer it self. He that dares riot and draw others into Excess and Lewdness with Emulation, is ready to commit every other Sin in the Heat of his Debauchery, and so disregard, all Characters, Relations, and Duties at once: Will not such a One be unjust too in his Dealings with Men to support his Extravagance,

or

or for oppressing those who are in his Power, **SERM.**  
or unfaithful to the Trusts committed to Him? **XI.**

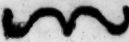
You may expect the *Ballance of Deceit* and *diverse Weights* to furnish the Means of gratifying Excesses. But

(2.) When the Infection is not confined to one Rank or Order of Men, but has diffused it self through the whole Body of the People; then a *Nation* may be said to be *sinful*, and a *People* to be *laden with Iniquity*. This was plainly the Case of Israel, v. 6. *From the sole of the Foot even unto the Head, there is no soundness in it; but Wounds and Bruises and putrifying Sores*: From the highest to the lowest they are all degenerate, like a Body over-run with a Leprosy, and there is *nothing* to be seen upon 'em but multiplied Offence and Provocation.

All *Ages* were tainted: *The Youth* were vain, and light, and frothy; given up to Pleasure; impatient of Restraint, and hating prudent Advice: *The middle-aged*, Ambitious and Worldly, laying out the Strength and Vigour both of Body and Mind to raise an Estate, or to compass Honour; but they say not, *where is God my Maker*, and leave the everlasting World and the Interests of it out of their Thoughts: *The Old* are stupified in Sin, and though they stand upon the Brink of this World they can look into the other, and have no Concern about it, but act as if their Design and Desire was, to transmit a vain Conversation to those that come after them.

And

SERM.

XI.  And thus, when all Ages and Sexes seem to try who shall shew least Concern about their Souls, and the World they are going to: When all are taken up with eating and drinking and dressing, and every One is striving who shall make the finest Appearance, and shine brightest in the World, and live with least Religion: When Masters and Servants combine to exclude Religion out of the Family, out of Business and Conversation: When Children and Parents agree to live in the Neglect and Contempt of all that is sacred: When Magistrates restrain not Sin, but give an infecting Example, and use their Authority to countenance it: When Subjects suffer not for the Breach of divine Laws, but grow bold with their Maker and with humane Laws too: When they *speakevil of Dignities, refuse Tribute to whom Tribute is due*, and directly rebel against supreme Authority: When the *Priests*, whose *Lips should keep Knowledge*, are ignorant and worldly, and the People are pleased with a heartless Ministry, and love to have it so.

When Sin has thus, like a Leprosy, spread it self over the whole Body, *then may a Nation be pronounced Sinful in this emphatical Sense.*

(3.) When those few who have any Appearance of Seriousness, have yet a great Deal very much amiss in them. When those who wear the Name of Religion evidently decline in it, and go off from that Purity and  
Seri-



SERMON. XI.  
 Seriousness which once adorned the Professors of it: When they don't appear to be imprest with divine Principles as formerly, and, tho' they make a fair and splendid show, are yet plainly of such a Temper and Course as is inconsistent with real Christianity: When they are manifestly degenerated from that Spirit and Way which was an Honour to the Gospel; When you observe *them* who call themselves Christians, to talk with as much Levity and as much Frothiness, with as much Obscenity and as little Guard, and to converse with as little Concern to honour God and the Redeemer as any Others: When Professors are generally got into a careless, fruitless way of Living, unconcerned about the Eye of God, about their own solemn Vows, and the awful accounting Day, and the everlasting World before 'em, as if there were *no* such Things, or they believed *nothing at all* about 'em: When Closets and Bibles are neglected, and Families are very rarely or very coldly prayed in: When Seats at Church are often empty, or at least are filled with thoughtless Hypocrites who plainly discover that their Hearts are elsewhere; And when there is visibly too little Difference between the Professor and the Prophan.

How much of our Religion is plainly no more than a Name? Many are no otherwise Disciples of Christ than as they bear his Character. Oh! what is become of that noble Spirit which animated the Christians of the

SERM. first Age, of whom so many Things are said  
 XI. in the *Acts* of the *Apostles*? Where is that

~ Tenderneſs and Circumſpection in Converſation which our Fathers had ſo much Concern about, and was the Glory of the old *Puritans*? Truly, they wou'd be aſhamed of us were they to appear again in our World. They wou'd little ſuſpect we were their Deſcendants. Among thoſe few that are Sincere, what Weakneſſes, what Spots are diſcernable upon them? Have not we all degenerated and *loſt our firſt Love*, and may we not this Day be called to *remember from whence we are fallen*? How rare are bright Examples of unaffected Holineſs? How few are there that take Pains to *adorn the Doctrine of God their Saviour*, and let their *Light ſhine before Men*? Are there not many that wear the honourable Badge of Chriſtianity, who yet cauſe the *Enemies* of God to *Blaspheme* by their uneven, their unſteady walking? Are there not many who over-value themſelves, and carry it with an unſeemly Pride and Haughtineſs towards their Fellow-Chriſtians? Are there not others, who plainly drink too deep in ſenſual Pleaſures, and ſpend much of their Time in *providing for the Fleſh that they may fulfill the Luſts thereof*? Are there not many who converſe too often and too freely with the wicked when they have no Call to it? Many that are lavish of their precious Time, and live as if they were made and ſent hither for no other Purpoſe than to miſpend and abuſe it?

Are

Are there not grievous and uncharitable Censures past among us? Too many whose Conversations are hardly ever free from 'em? They have a Stone to cast at every Neighbour; so breaking that Peace which they are obliged to follow and cultivate with all Men. Are not others sadly tainted with the Love of this World, which so clouds their Profession, that one can hardly tell whether to reckon 'em the *Servants of God* or of *Mammon*? They are still plodding, caring, hurrying, and contriving without End; and not satisfied with their present Acquisitions, are always impatient of more; And some, it is to be fear'd, make too free with the Laws of God, and with the Purity of their own Minds to compass their Worldly Designs. They will venture to stretch beyond the Truth, or beyond the Bounds of Justice to make a better or a harder Bargain, while at the same Time God has blessed them with a large and plentiful Encrease: Perhaps, some of these don't know how to part with a few Shillings for the Service of God, and his Cause, as if it were absolutely their own, and not to be used for God whose Stewards they are: And yet they are still grasping at more, but never think of a growing Account they have to give, and that a growing Estate lays them under Obligations to do more for God than others do. There is little of that *Simplicity* and *Godly Sincerity*, little of that Self-denial, mutual Love, Charity, and Contempt of the World which distin-



SERM. guishes the Followers of Christ from Others.

XI. How many of Us are wounding Religion, while  
 ~~~~~ We appear to be the Friends of it? Are not  
 our Congregations under visible Distempers,
 impatient of plain Dealing and Godly Disci-
 pline, having *itching Ears*, and *not enduring*
sound Doctrine? *How is the Gold become Dim!*
How is the fine Gold changed! Tell it not in Gath,
 publish it not in Askelon.

(4) When these Sins are all heighten'd by
 a great many provoking and aggravating Cir-
 cumstances; this goes a terrible Length towards
 filling up the Measure of a Peoples Iniquities.
 As for Instance,

In the first Place, when these Sins are com-
 mitted against clear Light, and great Advan-
 tages. This was the Case of *Judah*: To them
 pertained the Adoption: (that is, they were cal-
 led the Sons of God, his first born:) *And the*
Glory: (that is, among them God manifested
 Himself by the Tokens of his special Presence
 and Favour in a *visible Glory* between the *Che-*
rubims;) To them also pertained the Covenants;
 (both the Covenant with *Abraham*, and that
 with *Moses*) *And the giving of the Law*: (that
 is, they had the Honour of a Law given them
 immediately by the Voice of God from Hea-
 ven: He acted as their King, and fixed the
 Rule of their Actions;) *And the Service of God*:
 (that is, the Worship of God was settled a-
 mong them exactly;) *And the Promises*; (both
 of *Canaan*, and of the *Messiah*;) Rom. ix. 4.

When

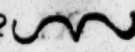
When the Oracles of God are committed to a People, and they have a clear Discovery of his Mind made to them by the Bible in their Hands, and all proper Means of understanding it: When a Nation is indeed a *Valley of Vision*, and good Books of all Sorts abound, and there are a great Number of Faithful, Serious, Judicious, Zealous Ministers to go before a People: When this, (I say,) is the Case, and a Nation is *laden with Iniquity* notwithstanding, it makes the Cry of their Sin so much the louder, and is in Effect saying, they will not submit to the divine Government: Their Crimes, in this Light, appear deliberate, and chosen, and resolved upon: And it's plain that no Instruction or Warning whatever will prevent them. *This is [THE] Condemnation (says our Lord) that Light is come into the World, and Men have loved Darknes rather than Light*; that is, there is no Condemnation like it: or this, of all others, is the most terrible. *John iii. 19.*

Secondly, When this abounding Sin is committed against a Multitude of Mercies, and long Patience exercised towards a People: Then they are a *Sinful People*. This also was the Case of *Judah*: God had brought them into his good Land, subdued their Enemies under them, commanded them to repent, and waited with great Long-suffering for their Return. And is it not a great Aggravation of *our* Guilt this Day, that God hath shewn a distinguishing Regard to *Us* above other Nations? Our national

SERM. Deliverances come as near to those of *Israel* as
 XI. ever any did. What Care hath been taken of our

Liberties, both civil and religious of our Health, and of our Peace? Are not we indulged with a mild and kind Government? Don't we sit, every Man under his own Vine, and under his own Fig-tree, none making us afraid? Have not we had God nigh unto Us in all that we have called upon Him for? Our Iniquities have called for Vengeance; but his Mercy hath spared Us. We have been saved from *Fire*, from *Pestilence*, and from *Cleanness of Teeth*. Our Enjoyments have been the constant Care of Heaven: And yet we have unworthily abused the great Goodness of God to Us. *Because Sentence against an evil Work is not executed speedily; therefore the Heart of the Sons of Men is fully set in them to do Evil,* Eccles. viii. 11. He has given us space to repent, and we have repented not.

Again thirdly, Incurable Hardness and Obstinacy in Sin, is another grievous Provocation. This was the Case of *Judah* in the Context. *Why shou'd ye be stricken any more? Ye will revolt more and more: v. 5. When God's Judgments are in the Earth, the Inhabitants of the World should learn Righteousness;* for these Judgments speak God's Anger, and they loudly call upon Us, to do the good we have not, and to fly from the Evil we have done. When we refuse to hear the Voice of the Rod, we are then said to walk contrary to God: When he sends lesser Afflictions, or afflicts but few, his Design is, that others may

may take Warning: It is then a Time for e. SERM.
 very Man to look inward, to lay his Hand XI.
 upon his Heart and say, *What have I done?* 
What does God now expect from me? But when
 we repent not, though we *have been* threatened,
 or lighter Corrections *have been* visiting us, it
 speaks a stupid Hardness a Senselessness of the
 Divine Admonition, or an obstinate Resolved-
 ness to go on in Sin. Corrections are Gods last
 Remedies of restraining a People, and are usual-
 ly sent, when the Voice of merciful Provi-
 dences have been contemned. Its a *Sinful* Na-
 tion indeed, where this highest Contempt is
 thrown upon the divine Authority, and the
 great God is thus set in Defiance: It is in
 Effect telling Him, "we will Sin as long as
 "we please, and have the Means of Sinning."

Hereunto we may add *fourthly*, An hypo-
 critical Profession of Religion, when in Real-
 ity there is an Aversion to the Power and Life
 of it lying at the Heart. This again was the
 Case of *Judah* as you may see, v, 15. and on
 wards. They will hear and pray and attend
 upon Sacraments; but they never Design all
 this shou'd reach the Heart, or have any suit-
 able Effect upon the Life: By this Means they
 may stop the Mouth of Conscience, and keep
 up a Character in the World: But is not this
 the highest Insult upon Heaven, a challeng-
 ing the great God to distinguish between a sin-
 cere and hypocritical Worshipper, and in Ef-
 fect saying, that the gain of this World is pre-

SERM. ferable to his Favour, and his Wrath but as

XI. painted Lightening that striketh not?

~~~~~ *Fifthly, and Lastly,* Another aggravating Circumstance is, when many hopeful Attempts and Beginnings of Reformation have been frustrated and come to nothing: Like Waters that were pounded up, till the weight grew to that Degree, that it carried away the Dam and Spread a wider Ruin. A baffling such Methods as these dreadfully increases our Account, and will make an inflamed reckoning at last.

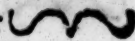
I come now briefly to shew in the next Place that,

II. When this is the Case, it is truly piteous and shou'd be deeply lamented: *A H Sinful Nation, &c.* Its a deplorable Case because,

(1.) The great God is then dishonoured and provoked to the *highest* Degree. A People in this Case have gone great and dreadful Lengths towards *filling up the Measure of their Iniquity*: And who can conceive the Greatness and Number of these Offences that have been daily and hourly given to the great and holy God? What Cries are continually ascending, and calling for quick and dreadful Vengeance to seize upon the Sinner, and plunge Him down into the burning Lake?

(2.) This is a Case truly piteous because it leaves us little Room to hope for a Reformation. The Means of it then fail us: This seems to have been very much the Case of the  
People

People of Judah at this Time, v. 23. *Thy Princes* SERM.  
*are Rebellious, and Companions of Thieves: Every* XI.

*One loveth a Gift and followeth after Rewards:* 

*They judge not the Fatherless, neither doth the Cause of the Widow come before them. In this Case a Spirit of Slumber seizes upon all: There is a common Unconcernedness at the Wrath of God, and but little Sense of Danger: There are none that stir up themselves to take bold on God, and they who shou'd lead others into a due Sense of their Condition, have themselves gone as deep as any: Ministers either warn not at all, or else are not regarded if they do, but hated persecuted and neglected as it was with Jeremiah before the Captivity.*

There is then generally a Langour upon the Minds of Men that are serious, and there are few that *sigh and cry in secret for the Abominations that are done in the Land.* Serious Magistrates are but few to put Laws in Execution against Vice, and discountenance the spreading Spirit of Prophaneness. Few Masters of Families are serious enough to instruct and teach Children and Servants in the Fear of God, that when these go abroad into the World, they may be bright and shining Examples of Piety and Virtue to Others. Alas! the good are afraid to shew themselves, and when they do, the World is generally prejudiced against them, and does not see or own the Excellence of vital Godliness in them; so that the Means of Reformation on all Hands fail us. Therefore,

(3). Sore



SERM.

XI.

(3.) Sore and dreadful Judgments must be supposed to be very near. And is not this a piteous Case? What can remain but that God shou'd say of such a People, as He does of the Jews here, *Ab, I will ease me of mine Adversaries, and avenge me of mine Enemies*, v. 24. Or, as He speaks elsewhere, (Jer v. 9.) *Shall I not visit for these things? Shall not my Soul be avenged on such a Nation as this?* It is Gods usual way in which He has treated Societies, when they are become generally Corrupt, and Patience has been long exercised towards them, and proper Methods taken for their Reformation without Success, thus to give them up to utter Ruin: And it's seldom that Ruin is far off when there is a general Depravity: So it was in *Israels* Case, as you read in the iv. of *Amos*: One thing after another had been done to bring them back to their Duty? but God complains that yet they wou'd not return to Him: *Therefore, it follows, thus will I do unto thee O Israel: And because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.* The Case was pretty much the same in the earlier Ages of Christianity: The Churches were first warn- ed: than had gentler strokes brought upon 'em for neglecting that Warning: And then they were rooted up. And may not *We* expect that our abused Plenty shou'd be taken away, and we be deliver'd up to *Cleanness of Teeth*? That we be no more trusted with Health, or Peace, or Liberty, who know so little how to value

or

or improve them? May we not fear that the Book of God shou'd be taken out of our Hands, and sealed up from our Eyes? That our *Ministers shou'd be driven into Corners, and the Synagogues of God burnt up in the Land*, when we attentively consider the Depravity and Corruption of our State?

This then is what makes the Case of a People or Nation truly piteous. Let me now conclude all with a few Reflections.

(1.) Have not *We* a great deal of Concern in this sad Case? Let us look into our Hearts, into our Houses, into our Congregations and Neighbourhoods, and upon all Persons that are under our Observation; and see whether the Case be not sadly our own: Is not that which is said of *Judah* in the Text truly our Character? May we not change the Name and put our own instead of it? Think this Matter over, Christians, till you become thoughtful and apprehensive what is to be done in such a Case. Think how cross you lie to all that's good and safe and happy, and that something or other must quickly be done either towards your Reformation or Destruction. And then

(2) Let us adore the divine Patience and Forbearance. *It is of the Lords Mercy, that we are not consumed, because his Compassions fail not.* Who but a Being of infinite Long-suffering wou'd have born so much, or endured so long with a guilty provoking People? What *short Work* has He made with others? What heavy

SERM. heavy Strokes have they groaned or sunk under?

XI. *Their Mercies* are gone, who never abused them so much as we: And whence is it that ours are continued? *What Desolations hath God made in the Earth* by Wars, Famine and Pestilence? *Others* have been thrown into the Furnace of Affliction and made Examples to Us, while *We* might have been made so to them. Is there any Nation under Heaven that God hath indulged so much as ours; when we have at least equaled any Other in our guilty Provocation and Abuse of Mercy? Hardly any People escape without some strokes of Severity: And we have felt little or nothing; but have had Blessings innumerable heaped upon our Heads: And if we ask, whence was not our guilty Land deluged with Wrath long ago? We must say, it is owing to the infinite Mercy and Forbearance of God.

(3.) We may hence learn where to charge all our uneasy Apprehensions and real Difficulties. We have been shortened in our Allowance for the two precedeing Years: Trade is under some Discouragements: Our Enemies are now combining; they are drawing the Sword; and have done it in some Parts: And is it not because we have too little regarded our God and his Goodness? Too little improved what He has been bestowing upon Us? Because we have been too secure, too proud, and unthankful? If this be the Case, and we are so much concern'd therein: Then

(4.) It's



(4.) It's most absurd and dangerous to be thoughtless and secure under it. Shall we sit down easy because we are not yet punish'd and therefore hope we never *shall*? Is there no Vengeance in store, no reckoning Day near, because Wrath has not yet seized upon Us? Alas! Sinner, *Judgment is Gods strange Work.*

SERM.  
XI.

By all He *has* done He shews how unwilling He is to bring Matters to an Extremity: But if thou art no better it will make his Fury the Hotter: And if his Patience be abused, it will be at thy utmost Peril. Have a Care of sitting down easy and contented, and saying, all is well. How can it be well with Us, while our Iniquities are so many and great, while our Corruptions have taken such deep Root, and our Reformation is so hardly accomplished?

Lastly, Let each of us try what may be done for the Relief of a sinful Land. We have each had a share in the Guilt and Offence: And shall not each of us have a share in the Calamity too, if this come upon Us? We are each of us under Obligations to Humility from our Christian Principles: Let no One therefore think himself unconcerned here. But, what shall we do, you'll perhaps say. I answer

(1.) Cry mightily unto God if so be He will think upon Us. You may all do this for the Assistance of a Church and Nation that is ready to sink under the Weight of its own Guilt. Pray God, if perhaps our great and numerous Crimes  
may

SERM.

XI.

may be forgiven Us: That He wou'd work a Way for the changing of Mens Spirits and Lives: Pray especially that the Spirit may be poured out upon Ministers, and may attend all their Ministrations: That they may be taught how to walk, how to perswade, and to invite Sinners to come to Christ. Pray that the Spirit of the living God wou'd join with their Endeavours, that Sinners may be quickened who are dead in *Trespases and Sins*, and raised to the Hopes of everlasting Life.

(2.) Put away Sin; every Man, from his *own Soul*. Remember that all your Prayers will be nothing without serious *Endeavours* after a Reformation: By Prayer you desire that God wou'd help you to do what you can't do your selves: And this supposes your hearty Willingness and Endeavour to do all that which lies in your *own Power*: This God calls upon *Israel* to do, ver. 16, 17. *Wash ye, make you clean, put away the Evil of your Doings from before mine Eyes, &c.* Pray therefore and labour that those Lusts may be subdued which have reign'd in your Souls: That your Worldliness, Pride, Hardness of Heart, Unbelief, Sensuality, Hypocrisy, Security, and Spiritual Sloth may be healed; all that has grieved the Spirit, and foster'd Temptations, and made you unaffected with Providences: Labour to have the Fountain purified, and the Life reformed: Let your Closets be oftener resorted to: Behave there as under the Eye of God; and be not such

such strangers to Meditation, Self-Examination, and Prayer as you have heretofore been: Let the House of God be oftener attended, and the Word of God better heard: Let your whole Conversation be more uniform and regular, and set a more strict and constant Watch over your Passions, Senses, and Appetites, and over all you say and do.

And then, put away all Sin from your Families. And what Family don't want reforming? Read and Pray oftener with them: Call 'em frequently to Account: Set a stricter Watch over them: Tolerate no Wickedness in Children, or Servants, or nearest Relations: Deal with *yours* privately: Admonish, Counsel and Reprove them as there is Occasion: Tell 'em plainly their Duty: Go before 'em in a good Example: And thus recommend in the most effectual Manner the things you teach them: Endeavour to make Religion fit easy upon your selves, and pursue it with Chearfulness, with Warmth and Earnestness, with Zeal and Steadiness, not by Fits and Starts. And so endeavour,

(3.) The Recovery of vital Godliness to the utmost of your Power in your several Capacities. Let it not be the *Form of Godliness* only, but the *Power of it* that you are promoting: Not the narrow Schemes of Men, but the great Principles of Christianity: This is a wide and glorious Foundation; and it's a thousand Pities it shou'd be narrow'd so shamefully as it is in things wherein we are all agreed,



SERM. agreed. There has hardly any thing been more  
 XI. hurtful to Religion, *vital Religion* than this: By  
 this means it has been much weakened, and long  
 decaying in the midst of us: And whilst many  
 have been eagerly set upon the lesser circumstan-  
 tial matters of Religion, they have lost that which  
 is only and really worth keeping, I mean the  
 Heart and Life, the Power and Influence of it.  
 Its true indeed, the Truth shou'd be always studi-  
 ed and defended, and the Worship of God main-  
 tain'd, as far as may be, in the Purity of it:  
 But it is *as* true that our Zeal about these  
 Things shou'd be only in Proportion to the Im-  
 portance of them: And, till I have better In-  
 formation, I must think that those Things  
 wherein Christians generally agree, are of vast-  
 ly more Importance than those in which they  
 differ. What can the *distinguishing Doctrines or*  
*Opinions* of any particular Party signify, where  
 there is no such thing as *living Religion* to be  
 found? It has always been of bad Consequence  
 for *Party Religion* to be advanced and set up  
 in the Place of *real Religion*; and for the ge-  
 nerality of Persons to think the former enough  
 for *themselves*, and all that's needful to be trans-  
 mitted to *Posterity*. It is *Party and Opinion* that  
 has eat up the very *Essence* of Religion, and left  
 us nothing but the *Name and Shadow* of it.

And, to conclude, I can't help observing;  
 that if the next Age sink as much from the Life  
 and Power of Godliness, as this Age is below the  
 last, we shall have little Religion that is *worth*  
*anything* left among Us.

S E R.



# S E R M O N XII.

VISIBLE JUDGMENTS upon Some, a loud  
CALL upon Others to close and serious  
REFLECTION.

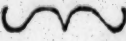
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2 CHRON. XXVIII. 10.

— But are there not with you, even with  
you, Sins against the Lord your God?

**W**HEN Gods Judgments are in the SERM.  
XII.  
Earth, He expects the Inhabitants of the  
World shou'd learn Righteousness: Even they who  
only see or hear what others suffer shou'd take  
warning thereby: His judicial Proceedings in  
the Methods of his Providence, are awful and in-  
structive Warnings, to all that come within the  
knowledge and hearing of them. We have great  
Reason to admire the Goodness of God in this,  
that when the great Governour of the World  
is in a manner forced to treat perverse Crea-  
tures with Severity, because they abuse his Good-  
ness, yet his Dealings with Sinners are so kind,  
X that

SERM. that He designs more than the immediate Suf-

XII.  ferers shou'd have Advantage by those Calamities He sends into the World; that by hearing what is done upon others, a great many who don't immediately suffer, may yet be brought to fear and do no more so wickedly, and thereby prevent their own Sorrows and Ruin. When Gods Judgments upon others fall under *our* Notice, they are so many express Warnings of Providence unto *us*: They tell us what we are to expect if our Sins be not put away: We cannot say that we have not deserved what others feel, or that they have deserved it more than we, though *we* are exempted from the strokes *they* feel: We shou'd carefully avoid such Thoughts as these, as what are Proud and Cenforious, and ought rather to consider that the great and wise God, as Sovereign of the World, may choose some of his Creatures equally guilty, that He will make Instances of his just Severity, and a Terror to Others: Nay, we are farther to consider, that sometimes He let's alone in Wrath those that are *joined to Idols*, while He punishes in Mercy those whom He designs to reclaim.

Our Neighbours all around us are made Examples before our Eyes; and it becomes us with humble Thankfulness to adore the distinguishing Goodness of God, that the Case is not just the reverse; that *we* are not Examples to *them*. We are now to enquire for what End God brings his Wrath in View, and sets as it were



were a Deaths-Head before us: It were Arrogance to say we have not sinned, and therefore don't suffer: By these terrible Things in *Righteousness* God is speaking to us to this Effect; "Consider your Ways, commune with your own Hearts, search out what is amiss, and let the offensive thing be given up:" For the suspension of Judgments with respect to our selves, whilst others are under them, is a Trial upon Us; and, if this be neglected or abused, what can we expect but sorer Calamities and greater Desolation? If we would receive any Benefit from the judicial Methods of divine Providence with others, we should apply this Question in the *Text* to our selves: *Are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God?* You are, in many Respects, in better Circumstances than your Neighbours; but, for all that, are you not Offenders? Might you not have been, may you not yet be, in as dismal Circumstances as the worst of them? We have in a great Measure been saved from the raging Distempers under which those about us have groaned. We have not felt that Distress in other Respects which a great many others have. This we have observed; but not as we ought; not with that Gratitude to God our Preserver as we should have done; nor with that deep Sense of our Sin and Unworthiness as becomes us. And this has led my Thoughts to the Words read which deserve our most serious Attention. It may be

SERM. of considerable Use to take some Notice of the

XII. Context: And in this Chapter we have an Account of the wicked Reign of *Abaz King of Judah*: Particularly, it is said of Him in some of the foregoing Verses, that *He walked in the Ways of the Kings of Israel, made Images for Baalim, and offer'd his Children in Sacrifice by Fire, after the Abominations of the Heathen, &c.* For this Reason God shew'd his Displeasure against Him; his Land was invaded by the King of Syria, and by the King of Israel; Multitudes of his People were slain, and many Captives were carried to *Damascus* and to *Samaria*. Now, at this latter Place there was a Prophet of the Lord, whose Name was *Oded*: (v. 9.) and he went out before the Host of Israel, as they were bringing their Captives and Spoil in great Triumph to *Samaria*, and said unto them, (observing how they were lifted up with their Victory,) *Behold, because the Lord God of your Fathers was wrath with Judah, He hath deliver'd them into your Hand; your Victory is not so much to be ascribed to your own Valour, as to the Anger of God against Judah; and ye have slain them in a Rage that reacheth up unto Heaven; such an excessive Rage as crieth to Heaven for Vengeance upon your selves. And now ye purpose, it may be, in the Pride of your Hearts, (v. 10.) to keep under the Children of Judah and Jerusalem for Bond-men and Bond-women unto you: but are there not with you, even with you, Sins against the Lord your God?* which

which if not repented of may bring down the like Vengeance upon your own Heads. "The Prophet bids them consider, that they who thought themselves Gods Favourites because He had made them so Victorious, had Sins enough to answer for: For which if He punish'd them as they deserved, they might be reduced to the same Condition with the Brethren of Judah."

In improving these Words, I wou'd

- I. A little distinctly explain, or paraphrase upon them.
- II. I shall deduce several instructive Propositions from them. And then make Application.

I. I shall explain and illustrate the Words. *Are there not with you, even with you Sins against the Lord your God?* And

[1.] Here is a Solemn *Appal made to Israel*, or a *Question asked them*: *Are there not with you?* &c. A strong Emphasis is laid upon the *interrogative* form of Speech, whereby the thing is stily affirmed: *Are there not Sins?*

(1) Do not your own Consciences tell you it is so? Observe your Hearts, what passes there: Let that Principle which is Gods *Vice-gèrant* now speak out: *Give it leave* to utter its inward Conviction and Sense of this Matter, and *seriously attend* to the Remonstrances of it: This will tell you terribly and plainly



SERM. that there *are* with you *Sins*: Your Case is such;  
 XII. that nothing can keep you in Ignorance but  
 refusing to attend to what passes in your own  
 Souls: If you will but consult your selves, you  
 will be unavoidably led to see Sin, and charge  
 your selves with it: Don't stop the Mouth of  
 Conscience; it is vain, foolish, and wicked so  
 to do: Though you stop it now, it will not be  
 always stopped: What if it *do* give you some  
 Uneasiness at present? *That* may be a Means  
 of preventing your Ruin: But if you will not  
 suffer it to speak, you may grow more harden-  
 ed in your Rebellion, your Case will be so  
 much the worse, and your Destruction more  
 terrible when it *does* come.

(2.) *Are there not with you Sins?* that is, is  
 it not *notorious* that there are *Sins*? Look round  
 about you, and observe the State of Religion  
 amongst you: See how every Man lives and  
 acts. You *declare* your Sin as Sodom, and  
*hide it not*; and the *shew* of your Counten-  
 ance does witness against you, Isa. ii. 9. Go to  
 Bethel, (if you cannot be convinced nearer  
 Home :) view the *high Places*, the *Altars*, the  
*Groves*, and every City where you live or con-  
 verse: Behold, how your Neighbours talk and  
 act: See the Violence, the Falshood, and the  
 Swearing under which the Land groans: Con-  
 sider the Injustice, the Oppression, the Fraud,  
 the Contempt of the great God, and the Pro-  
 phanation of his Worship: See the Drunken-  
 ness, the Uncleaness, the Luxury the Sensu-  
 ality;

ality; the Pride, Strife and Envy that Reigns SERM. 4  
 in almost *all* Places. You cannot open your **XII.**  
 Eyes but you must see what will grieve a ten-  
 der Spirit. You must stop your Ears, if you  
 will not hear what will wound a pious sensible  
 Mind. Wickedness like a Flood has over-spread  
 the Land, and the true Religion is almost *laid*  
*waste*. There are none of you but must observe  
 this in your *daily* Conversation.

[2.] Here are the *Persons also to whom this*  
*Appeal is made*; namely, the *Israelites*: Which  
 is another Circumstance considerable in the  
 Words. *Are there not with YOU, even with*  
*YOU Sins?* &c. The Reduplication plainly in-  
 sinuates, that it wou'd be the greatest Shame  
 and Scandal that cou'd be for Gods *Israel* to  
 be thus Guilty. Are there not with you? &c.

(1.) With you who are *Israelites*: With you  
 who profess devotedness to the *Lord Jehovah*:  
 With you that are called out of the common  
 World, and whom God has *commanded* to be  
*Holy as He is Holy*: With you who have *pro-*  
*fessed* to be holy, and have declared yourselves  
 the Servants of the true God: With you who  
 have *possessed the Land*, have the *Sign of the*  
*Covenant* in your *Flesh*, and are descended from  
*Abraham the Friend of God*? It is with **YOU**,  
 even with **YOU** that these Sins are found, even  
 the *Abominations of the Heathen*; Sins most op-  
 posite to those pure and righteous Precepts which  
 God has given you, as well as contrary to the  
 repeated and solemn Vows you have utter'd be-

SERM. fore Him. Is it not very sad and lamentable,

XII. that you who have been tied so fast to God,  
 ~~~~~ shou'd prove so loose and negligent in your Service of Him?

(2.) Are there not Sins with *you* who are in so much better Circumstances than others? With *you* that are now victorious, while your Neighbours are brought under and led into Captivity: God has not given *you* into the Destroyers Hands, and yet this has not prevented your Sins.

May I not apply this to our selves? *Are there not with YOU*, you Inhabitants of BIRMINGHAM, you *Members of this Congregation*, Sins against the Lord your God? *Tou*, who have been Spectators and Hearers of the Cries of your Neighbours; *Tou* who have not had those frequent and multiplied Funerals; *Tou*, whose *Poor* have not been so grievously pinched, and who have not felt that Weight in relieving them that others have; *Tou*, upon whom the Hand of God has been light, compared with the Weight of it upon others: *Do YE thus requite the Lord, O foolish People and unwise?* For which of his Mercies do ye despise Him? Why will ye suffer Sin to be *with you*, when it is so offensive to God? Is *He* so tender of your Health and Peace and Comfort, and *you* not tender of *his* Honour? Will you harbour *his* Enemies, who has stood your Friend so long? For what Reason is it better with *you*, than those about you? Certainly it is not that *you* may have more Opportunity and Encouragement to Sin than *they* have. These

These Sins are properly WITH you too.

(1.) In your *Hearts*. How *deceitful*, how *desperately wicked* are these; the very source and spring of *hellish Spawn*, that's always mature, and ready to produce it self in open Transgression? Look deep and inward, into your very Hearts, and see if there are not in You Sins against, the Lord your God. What Pride and Arrogance are there? What Envy, Malice and Uncharitableness? What Hardness and Impenetrability? What Contempt of God and of Christ? What Disrelish of sacred Services? What Earthliness? What Sensuality? What Security? What Presumption? What Dislike to strict and vital Godliness? What Backwardness to Humiliation or Reformation? What Vanity in the Temper of your Spirits? How little trembling is there under Gods Frowns? What little Pity or Compassion for your suffering Brethren and Neighbours? How little Gratitude for the manifold Blessings God bestows upon you? How little Sense of your Sins, or relenting for them? How Fearless have you been of Death though lamentably unready for it? Oh! what vile, complicated, multiplied Iniquity is here? With what Pains is it forged in the Heart? And with how much Pleasure is it revolved in the inward Thoughts? There may be a great deal of Sin in the Heart, where there is little Gross or Scandalous appears in the Life and Conversation.

(2.) Are

SERM.

XII.

(2.) Are there not *with* you; (not in your Hearts only, but) in your *Houses* Sins against the Lord your God? Are not the Duties of your Family and Relations miserably neglected? Are not your Houses without Morning and Evening Sacrifices of Prayer and Praise? Are not your Children and Servants uncatechized, unrestrained, and uncorrected; or don't you allow your *selves* in those things which encourage *them* in Sin? When *they* Sin, can't they plead they learned it from their Father or Mother, Master or Mistress? Is not the Day of the Lord prophaned by the Neglect of holy Exercises, by feasting and indulging of the Flesh, by vain Chat, idle Walks and Visits?

Moreover, is there not a Want of Justice in your Dealings, and a manifest Eagerness and Immoderation in your Pursuits of this World? Is not the Religion of the Family dwindled into a cold lifeless out-side Formality, rather than kept up with Life and seriousness? Is it not done more out of Decency and Custom, than a Sense of Duty and Obligation?

(3.) Are there nor *with* you Sins in the *publick* *Worship* of God? If you *have* attended there; yet with how little Preparation and Care, with how little Fear and Reverence have you come into Gods immediate Presence, not considering that He is the Observer of your Hearts and of all your Principles and Aims? Have you not brought your Bodies there, when your Hearts have been left behind, and so prophaned *that*
glorious

glorious and fearful Name, THE LORD YOUR GOD? You have not sanctified Him in your Hearts, nor made Him your Fear and your Dread. With what Laziness and Inattention, with what Gazing and Drowsiness have you oftentimes prayed unto God; without any Desires of those things you have asked for, and unaffected with the Sins you have confessed before him? There has been little *Brokenness or Contrition of Heart*, and but little longing after Communion with God and Christ. Your Lips have blessed Him for Mercies, whilst your Hearts have been unthankful for them; and *Iniquity* has been regarded while God has been *professedly honoured*. Have you not had *itching Ears*, and been ready to condemn the plain necessary and wholesome Truths of the Gospel? How often have you gone away from hearing the Word without any real Benefit by it, and yet with little or no Regret as if you had met with no Disappointment? How oft have you complain'd of the Commands of Christ, and been only partial in your Acceptance of Him? Which of us have sat as Christ's Scholars at his Feet, saying as humble Learners, *Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?*

(4.) Are there not *with* you Sins in Conversation? Your Tongues are not kept as with a Bridle: Back-biting, accusing falsely, or upon slight Occasion; Nay, if I have not been misinformed, Swearing and Cursing have now got a Place among Dissenters, and (I speak it with

SERM. a trembling Heart, and that without much

XII. Penetration) forebode the Ruin of vital Religion among us. I had always hoped we had been Strangers of this sort of Language tho' we have a great many other Faults; such as rending in Pieces the good Names of others purely upon Dislike to, or Prejudice against them; spending Hours and Days in idle insignificant Tattle, and often in that which is worse: Edifying profitable Discourse has been too much neglected, such as might Minister Light, or Warmth, or Watchfulness to the Hearers.

And let me add, are there not Sins in your Conversation, that is, in your *Dealings* too? When you trick and over-reach others in Buying or Selling: *In Buying*, when you disparage and run down that which your own Judgments tell you is good: And *in Selling*, when you make an immoderate and excessive Gain, or put off that which is bad for good. In a Word, are you in any Respects doing as you cou'd reasonably desire others shou'd do to you, were you in *their* Circumstances and *they* in *Yours*? And is not friendly Assistance to such as stand in need, when you are capable of giving it, too much neglected?

Are there not WITH you Sins against the Lord your God? Are they not in your Hearts in your Houses, in the publick Worship of God, and in your daily Conversation?

[3] Here is the Matter of this Appeal, or the thing enquired about: *Are there not with you SINS?*

(1.) You

(1.) You are guilty: You can't pretend otherwise: Alas! *There is not a just Man upon Earth that lives and Sins not.* But this is not all; Yours are more than the common Infirmities of lapsed Nature: They are gross and scandalous Sins that you are chargeable with. Are there not with you those *abominable* Sins which Gods righteous Soul hates; and upon the Account of which He hath said, *shall I not visit for these things? Shall not my Soul be avenged on such a Nation as this?*

(2.) There are Sins with you; not only some and a few, but many. *Are there not with you, even with you Sins against the Lord your God?* They are multiplied exceedingly, and they testify to your Faces: You have run every Way that Lust, or Temptation prompts and draws you, either for Gain or Pleasure: Your Sins have been many and oftentimes repeated.

[4.] Here is the Malignity and Aggravation of their Sins pointed out. *Are there not with you, even with you Sins AGAINST THE LORD YOUR GOD.*

(1.) Not against your *Idol-Gods* and their Honour. That wou'd not expose you to any Danger; They are poor impotent Things; a meer Name: They can neither help their Worshipers, nor hurt their Contemners. Nor,

(2.) *Is it Man only* that your Sins are against. Then some Compensation might be made: A wounded Body may be healed; and perhaps an injured Estate and Reputation may be repaired:

SERM. paired: *If one Man Sin against another the*
 XII. *Judge shall judge Him:* 1 Sam. ii. 25. Not but
 that Sins against Man are Sins against God: They are Injuries done to the Work of his Hands, to his Creatures over which He has given us no such Power. Nay, they are against God as they are against his Law; but yet (tho' I wou'd not say this to abate your Dread of them) they have not all the Malignity in them as Sins more immediately against God. Which leads me to observe,

(3.) They are Sins against the LORD. There lies the Malignity of them. They are against *Jehovah, the living and true God*: Against him who has made you what you are, and given you all your Powers; *whose you are, and whom you are bound to serve*. Your Sins are an Injury to his Perfections: They are an high Affront to his Majesty; a withdrawing your selves from his Service; a Sacrilegious alienating that which shou'd be devoted to sacred Purposes. Your Sins against *Jehovah* are in Effect challenging Him with an usurped Government. Tongue cannot express, nor can the Mind of Man conceive the Malignity there is in Sin: *If a Man Sin against the Lord (as you have often done) who shall entreat for Him?* 1 Sam. i. 25.

(4.) They are Sins against the Lord YOUR GOD. The God who has laid his Will and Law before you; who has published it with awful Terrour, and guarded the Honour of it with most dreadful and tremendous Threatenings.
 With

With you there are Sins against that God who has brought you into Covenant with himself, to whom you have been solemnly engaged and stand nearly related. You have assured him *Idols* and *Lusts* shou'd not command you any more, and have protested to be *his* and *not for another*.

But let me address you as *Christians*: Have you not in Baptism renounced the World, the Flesh, and the Devil? Have you not taken God to be your Sovereign Lord and Supreme Good? Have you not bound your selves to obey the Rules of the Gospel, as well as to hope for the Blessings of it? Have you not over, and over again, given up your Names to God, and said, "Lord I am thine, save me?" Has he not condescended to *make a Covenant* with you by *Sacrifice*, and that by the Sacrifice of his own Son? Is He not become your God? Has He not passed his Word for it, that you shall have *Grace and Glory*, that He will support you now and save you for ever? Now, it's against *this God* that you have sinned; and don't you blush, and bleed, and tremble at the Thoughts of it? Has He deserved to be thus treated? Shall we use our God thus? Shall a Nation change their God; their Strength and their Glory, for *Idols* and *Vanities* that cannot save, nor protect them? Or, will you dishonour and affront the great God, the God of *Israel*, who is not ashamed to be called YOUR God? Are the Favours you have received from Him worth

SERM. worth no more, and those that are yet be-
 XII. hind no more deserving your Care? Do you
 thus provoke the Lord YOUR GOD? Ah,
 foolish People and unwise!

(5.) It is the Lord your God, *that has kept you from the Sorrows others have felt, and given you the Blessings that others want.* Ingratitude has always been reckon'd one of the most foul Offences; and this you have been guilty of: You are not Sick or in Pain, in Want or Sorrow, whilst others are afflicted with one or all of these: Why were *they* not spared, and you severely smarting and groaning; but because God is gracious and wou'd have you wise at the Expence of others? And are there Sins with you? O, *whither will you cause your Shame to go? The Ox knows his Owner, and the Ass his Masters Crib: But Israel doth not know, my People doth not consider.* Isa. i. 3.

I shall now in the next Place as I propos'd,

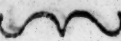
II. Deduce some doctrīnal Observations from the Words. And from hence we may collect that,

(1.) The sight of Judgments upon *others* shou'd put us upon serious Reflection, whether there be not *with us Sins against the Lord our God.* You may suppose the poor captive Inhabitants of *Judah* were all before the Prophets Eyes when He spoke this; and while they were greatly distressed the Israelites perhaps might insult over them; The Prophet there-
 fore

fore says, *are there not with you, even with you* SERM.
Sins, &c. XII

The *over-flowing Scourge* might have been made as easily to pass upon us; but God is willing to try what the *Sight* of his Terrors will do, before He *lays his Rod upon our Backs*. He will try whether we will be driven without Blows: And shou'd not the very gracious Design of a forbearing God be taken Notice of and complied with? It is certainly our Duty and Interest to comply with the Designs of Providence; to *think of our Ways* at all Times, but more especially when God has been punishing others in our very Sight. In the *Day of Adversity* we are to *consider*: In the Day of others Adversity as well as our own. Our Warning and Amendment is one Design of Gods Judgments upon others.

(2) There may be Sins even among a People who profess a special Relation to God. O, that it were only *possible*; that it were not actually true. The Church is at present composed of imperfect Saints, whose Graces at best are not perfect, and whose Duties of Course cannot be so. Tho' they are *sanctified throughout, in Spirit Soul and Body*, there is yet Ignorance as well as Knowledge, Sense and Flesh as well as Faith and Spirit, Earthliness as well as Heavenly-Mindedness, and they are too often out of Frame for any thing Spiritual and Serious. But this is not all; there are *Hypocrites* in the Church *whose Gain is Godliness*;
 Y many

SERM. many who call themselves Christians out of
 XII. Custom; who have no Desire nor Design to put
 on Christ: They are Strangers to the sanctifying
 Work of the Spirit, and the Power of Godli-
 ness; and it is not to be wonder'd at that these
 Occasion much Sin, and commit much; that
 they are *Lovers of Pleasure more than of God.*

(3.) Our escaping the Afflictions which
 fall upon others does not argue that we are
guiltless, or that we are *less guilty* than the af-
 flicted. Sometimes the divine Strokes fall hea-
 viest, as to outward Appearance, where there
 has been much less Provocation than *they* have
 given who have escaped those Strokes. God
 hath said of some, *They are joined to Idols, let*
them alone: It is to no Purpose to take Pain to
 reclaim 'em. *Hos* iv. 17.

(4.) They who have *sinned*, and yet have not
suffer'd as others, shou'd nevertheless be fear-
 ful of going on in Sin. It was to check the
Israelites, who seem'd not to be apprehensive
 of their State, that the Prophet puts this Que-
 stion to them; *Are there not with you, &c.* This
 above all Things shou'd be our Dread; least,
because Sentence against our evil Works is not ex-
ecuted speedily, our Hearts shou'd be fully set in
us to do Evil, *Eccles* viii. 11. Can we think
 that God spares us, only that we may have
 more Liberty to wallow in Sin, to provoke
 Him, and estrange our selves from Him? You
 know the devoted Nations were let alone, and
Israel was not to destroy them for several Years:

The

The Reason was, because their Iniquity was not yet ripe. *God forbid*, that this shou'd be our Case. SERM. XII.

(5.) They who abuse God's Forbearance, and harden themselves against all the Tokens of his Wrath while He is punishing others, may expect *exemplary* and *tremendous Strokes* to fall upon themselves. What can remain for such but *fery Indignation to consume the Adversary*? When God had cast off the *ten Tribes* for their Apostacy, it's plain He expected *Judah* shou'd tremble and return to Him. He leads them to consider this by his Prophet *Jeremiah*, and complains of *Judah* upon this Score as worse than *Ijrael*, because they did not take the Warning. What have we Reason to fear in the present Posture of Things amongst Us? Have we trembled at Gods Judgments? Have we returned to the Lord with our *whole Hearts*? Nay, has there been a *seeming* to return? Alas! there has not been the Appearance of it. What Sins have we put away? What Duties have we taken up? Or, wherein are we the better for the Hand of God upon Others?

I shall close all with a Word or two of Advice.

(1) Are there with us Sins *against the Lord our God*? Let us give Him the Glory of his Forbearance towards us, and tremble at his Judgments upon others. Surely we, (above any Persons) shou'd say, *it is of the Lords Mercy that we are not consumed, because his Compassions fail not*. And while we bless God for what He

SERM. *has done, let us pray that He wou'd work our*

XII. souls into a Compliance with the great Design
 of his Forbearance; that the Frowns of his Providence upon others may excite our holy Fear and Dread of his Wrath. Let us revere the holy and righteous and jealous God, while He punisheth Sinners; and consider at the same Time what his Rod is speaking unto us. Let us remember, *it is a fearful thing to fall into the Hands of the living God*, and reckon it our great Privilege that, by what we see others suffer, we are called upon to *repent that Iniquity may not prove our Ruin.*

(2.) Pray that your Sins may be forgiven, and your Natures sanctified. Look to the Throne of Grace through the great Mediator the Lord Jesus Christ: Implore pardoning Mercy for his Sake; and Pray to be saved through his Blood. It will avail you little to be saved from *temporal* Strokes if you are not saved from *eternal* Torments. Nor let your Concern stop here: Be not only concerned to be saved from the Wrath that is due to Sin; but beg that the sinning Nature may be changed; that the Spirit of God may be given to dwell and work in you, and make you *holy as He is holy*; that of Enemies you may become the Friends, and of Rebels be made the Servants and Children of God.

(3.) Let the *hateful, the offensive thing* be mourned over and put away, whatever it is. When once you see the Foulness of your Crimes,
 the

the Unreasonableness of your Temper and Conduct, and how injurious you have been to the Blessed God (if you have the least Degree of true spiritual Life) you will immediately fall down before Him with deepest Regret and Sorrow. No longer have, a *Confederacy* with his Enemies, or hold a Correspondence with them. Let no Lust find Favour or Compassion in your Eyes. Let your Hearts and your Houses be searched. Look into these with Care and Exactness, and let your common Employments and Conversation be better attended to and guarded than they have hitherto been.

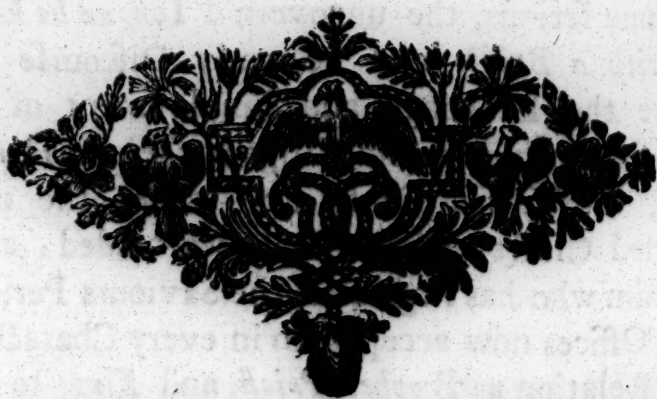
(4.) Cultivate those Graces and Duties which are most opposite to the Sins wherewith you have been entangled. As you are in general, to set your Faces a contrary Way to what you have done, so more particularly in those Instances wherein you have offended the *Lord your God*. Let the proud labour earnestly for a humble and lowly Spirit. Let the vain Heart become serious, the ungovern'd *Tongue be kept as with a Bridle*, and heavenly Discourse be more the Language and Employment of it. Let the Slothful become diligent, the hard Heart soft, the seared Conscience tender, the neglected Closet and Family duly attended; and let him who has neglected the Saviours Person and Offices now accept him in every Character and Relation as *Prophet, Priest, and King*, to be ruled, taught, and saved by Him.

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XII.

(5.) Let us prevent Sins being any longer with us as far as our Influence will go. How good and how excellent a Work is this? Who will rise up for God against the *Evil-doer*? You don't know how far God may own and honour you in such an Attempt; however He will accept and reward your sincere Endeavours.

(6) Be earnest with God for more plentiful Effusions of his Spirit. This is the Way to prevent Sins being with you. Pray that the Spirit may be poured out upon *Magistrates*, that they may learn themselves to be a *Terrour to Evil-doers*; and upon *Ministers* also, that with sacred Skill, Liveliness, and Warmth they may draw Souls to Jesus Christ: Thus Sin will have no more Dominion over those Souls: Thus they will become the *Lords People*.





SERMON XIII.

CHRIST the SUN of RIGHTEOUSNESS, &c.

MALACHI IV. 2.

But unto you that fear my Name, shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in his Wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as Calves of the Stall.

OUR great Work as Christians is, to study Christ and our selves; and no thing is more Necessary, Advantageous, or Comfortable. These two Subjects are propos'd to us in the Text: Namely, *the Knowledge of CHRIST*, what He is in himself, and what He is appointed, able, and willing to do for Sinners; in Comparison of which all other Knowledge is poor, low, and worthless, and what we shou'd account but *as Drofs and Dung*.

And surely, it's no less necessary to be acquainted with *our own dark, diseased, polluted, and helpless State*, in Order to *raise our Value*:

SERM. for *Jesus Christ*, kindle in us the warmest De-
XIII. fires after Him, and dispose us to a thankful

cheerful Acceptance of Him; for the Physician is not esteemed unless the Patient be sensible of his Danger.

This is the last of the sacred Prophecies in the Canon of the Old Testament; and the Spirit of Prophecy shines in it, as clear and strong and bright, as in most that went before. Few, if any of the Prophets, have spoke of CHRIST more plainly and distinctly than this does: He speaks of Him as *at Hand*, to encourage the Faith and Expectation of the Jews, since no more Prophecies were to be made concerning Him. And the Spirit of God seems wisely to have ordered, that a stop shou'd be put to the Spirit of Prophecy before the Appearance of *the great Prophet*, that He might be sufficiently distinguished from all others, and to make his Coming and Appearance the more Welcome.

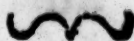
I shall here consider,

- I. The glorious Title given to the Lord Jesus Christ, *The Sun of Righteousness*.
- II. The Character of his People: They are such as *fear his Name*.
- III. The Promise He makes unto them: *The Sun of Righteousness shall arise unto such with Healing in his Wings, and they shall go forth, and grow up as Calves of the Stall.*
We have,

I. The

I. The glorious Title given to the Lord Jesus Christ, *The Sun of Righteousness*: And here are two things to be taken Notice of;

SERM.
XIII.



[1.] In what Respects He is called *the Sun*.
And

[2.] Why *the Sun of Righteousness*.

[1] In what Respects is He called *the Sun*? The Glory of CHRIST is in it self so great, that when it is described to us in Scripture, some sensible Representation is made Use of to assist our Conceptions. It cannot be described *in it self*, and is therefore frequently represented to us by something most glorious, excellent, or useful. The Oracles of God abound with such Representations: Sometimes He is called, the *Morning-Star*, a *Rock*, a *Spring of living Water*, the *Bread of Life*, *White Raiment*, *Gold tried in the Fire*, the *Pearl of great Price*, and many other such Resemblances there are of Him; and the Reason I conceive is this; that *no one*, or *all* the excellent pleasing things we know, can fully represent Him; and to intimate, that all that is valuable in these, and more than all is found in Christ; and it may also be designed (when our Hearts are too much affected with the good things about us, and begin to warm with Fondness for them) to turn our Thoughts to Him who is infinitely more deserving: He surpasses and transcends them all.

This in the Text is the most glorious: It comes nearest the Truth, and gives us the most lively and affecting Apprehensions of Him.
He

SERM.

XIII.

He is said to be the *Light of Men*, and that *Light which lighteth every Man that cometh in to the World*: Nay, our Lord Himself says, *I am the Light of the World*, John viii. 12. or which is the same thing in other Words, I am the *SUN* to the World. Now our Lord may be compared to the *Sun* on these several Accounts following;

(1.) As the *SUN* is but One, so the Saviour is but one. The Sun in the Heavens has no other besides Himself, known to us at least: There are a great Number of lesser Lights, but to us there is only *one Sun*, whose Glory is singular and matchless: He is above all the Creatures, and has no Equal: It's *his Work* to enlighten the World as the great Minister of God: The other Lights, the Moon and Planets, do *something*; but these are all kindled up by the Sun, and depend entirely upon *his Rays*.

In like manner, the Lord Jesus Christ is One: He is the *only begotten of the Father*: He is the Source and Origin of all the divine Light which has shone upon the World of Mankind: He is the *one Mediator between God and Man*; and *one Person*, God and Man united: He was the *one offering for Sin*, and there is none besides Him: He is the *one Name* in which there is Salvation: His is the *one Righteousness* we have for our Justification: He is the *one Teacher* that came from God; all others are derived from Him and subordinate to Him: He is the *one Intercessor* in Heaven, and the *one Head*
over

over all things: And as He is one Person, and one high Priest and Offering, so He *once offered up himself* for all, a Sacrifice to satisfy divine Justice: There is a **ONENESS** runs thro' his whole Character as Mediator. SERM. XIII.

Now let you and I turn our Eyes off from every thing else unto this Saviour, and apply to Him as our only Teacher from God, as the one High Priest to atone for our Sins, and reconcile us to our offended Sovereign: Let us plead his Merits alone, trust in his Name, and expect all through Him: If you exclude the SUN, all things else about you cannot make Day; and if you shut out this *one Name, the Sun of Righteousness*, or the one Mediator Jesus Christ, you will never find Peace with God and everlasting Blessedness.

(2.) CHRIST may be called *the Sun* on Account of his Greatness. The SUN is a stupendous Mass of Matter, though his Distance much lessens his Magnitude to our Sight. "The Sun," (says that great Philosopher and Divine Mr. Boyle,) though at this Distance it seems not to be above half a Foot broad, yet is never thought less than a hundred and sixty Times the Bulk of this Earth." * And according to the latter Calculations of some accurate modern Artists, it has been judged eight or ten

* Boyle of the high Veneration Mans Intellectual owes to God.

SERM. thousand Times as big as the terraqueous Globe,
 XIII. and by further Observations may perhaps be
 found to be yet much bigger. Let this be as
 it will, it is certainly the greatest Bulk or Bo-
 dy of Matter we have any Knowledge of, and
 therefore the most apt and proper Representa-
 tion of the *Lord Jesus Christ*. The Diameter
 of the Sun may be measured, but the *Great-
 ness of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Sun of Righte-
 ousness is unsearchable*. Who can compute his
 Height above us, his Distance from us, and dis-
 cover all his Perfections and Glories? *Canst
 thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find
 out the Almighty to Perfection?* With what
 Majesty and Grandure does the Prophet deliver
 his divine Inspiration concerning Him? (Isa.
 xl. 12. &c.) *He measures the Heavens with a
 Span, the Earth is as the small Dust of a Bal-
 lance, (a little Grain that signifies nothing, and
 cannot turn the Scale one Way or other,) the
 Sea as the Drop of a Bucket; Nay, and all
 the Creation is to Him as nothing, yea less than
 nothing and Vanity.* All the Powers of Num-
 ber are too weak to compute, and the utmost
 stretch of created Thought can do nothing to
 reach his Height. Let the poor distressed
 wounded Soul rejoice in such a Saviour as this:
 He is great as the SUN, and sheds his Influ-
 ences in whatsoever Degrees they are wanted.

(3.) Christ may be compared to the SUN on
 Account of his Glory. The Sun is glorious it
 self, and is the great Means of shewing the
 Glory

Glory of other Creatures There is nothing comparable to it for Splendor and Beauty: Other Lights are dimmed and put out by this: The Stars and Planets cannot appear till He is withdrawn, and such is the strength of its Beams that they easily dazzle our weak and tender Eyes.

Now this is a proper Representation of the Lord *Jesus Christ*, whose Brightness transcends not only Men on Earth, but Angels in Heaven. When our Lord was on Earth, and pleased to display any of his Glory; how wonderfully did He shine? *We beheld his Glory*, (saith Saint John,) *the Glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth.* He looked like an incarnate God, tho' He had cloathed Himself in a milder Glory. When He was *transfigured* before his Disciples, *his Face did shine as the Sun, and his Raiment was white as the Light*; and with so much Consternation and Surprise were his Disciples filled upon this Occasion, that *they wist not what to say.* When He appeared from Heaven to St. Paul, He struck Him to the Ground and those that accompanied Him. And you may see how the Angels themselves behave in his Presence (*Isa. vi. 1, 2, 3.*) *I saw also the LORD sitting upon a Throne, high and lifted up, and his Train filled the Temple. Above it stood the Seraphims: Each one had six Wings; with twain He covered his Face, and with twain He covered his Feet, and with twain He did Fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, Holy, Holy*

Holy is the Lord of Hosts, the whole Earth is full of his Glory: Which Vision is expressly applied to our Lord Jesus Christ in the xii. of John 41. These things said Esaias, when He saw his Glory, and spake of him.

Christ is a SUN for Glory; He is the *Brightness of his Fathers Glory, and the express Image of his Person*: He is the Head over all the invisible Worlds; *Angels, Principalities, and Powers being Subject to Him*: He is at the Fathers right Hand, and the *Angels themselves are bid to worship Him*. Let us admire this Glory of his, and adore him as One that has a *Nature and Name, above every Nature and every Name, not only in this World, but also in that which is to come.*

(4.) CHRIST may be called the SUN in Regard of his Dominion. God has appointed the Sun, that greater *Light, to rule by Day*, Gen. i. 16. Its Dominion is of vast Extent, and its Power and Influence reaches to all Creatures: According as He withdraws or approaches, they lie down or rise up: All Nature freshens when in the Spring He approaches, and again it withers and dies when He withdraws.

But the Lordship of the *Sun of Righteousness* is of vastly greater Extent: He has Dominion over all the visible and invisible Worlds; Angels and Men, Beasts and Devils being subject to Him: JESUS had a Throne and Dominion above when the Sun was not yet made, and his Throne will stand when the Sun shall be

no more: *Thy Throne, O God, is for ever and ever*, Heb. i. 8. He has the whole Creation at his Beck; He has all his Enemies under his Feet, and He can support all his Friends: At his Pleasure He breaks the Powers and Projects of Hell, defeats the Measures, and serves his own Honour by the Malice of his Enemies. His is the Kingdom of Light, and not of Darkness: His Government is rightful, and not usurped; mild and gentle, not tyrannical. Its exercised with great Wisdom and Goodness; *Righteousness and Judgment are the Habitation of his Throne*, even when Clouds and Darkness are round about Him: He means the Welfare of his People, and (as the SUN) does good where ever He comes: All his Influences are friendly and beneficial.

(5.) CHRIST may be called the SUN in Respect of its Motion and Activity. The Sun never stands still, but constantly bears its Light and Influence forward; and its Office seems to be performed with the greatest Chearfulness and Pleasure, according to that fine Image or Representation of it in Psal. xix. 5. *It is as a Bridegroom coming out of his Chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong Man to run a Race.* Such and more, yea infinitely more than such is the Son of God the Sun of Righteousness: As the great Governor of the World He is always busy, dispensing good to his Creatures. Whilst He was engaged in our Nature on Earth, not content to wait for Opportunities, He sought after them:
And

SERM. And now He is ascended to Heaven, He tri-

XIII. umphs in his Work, and makes Intercession
 for the Saints; is preparing them Mansions,
 sending down his Spirit, and carefully inspect-
 ing the whole World and Church. He acts
 the Part of a King, a Father, an Advocate, a
 Shepherd, and a Captain; He sustains all these
 Characters which imply Activity and Work.
 May *We* endeavour in this Respect to imitate
 Him; and while He is thus busy for *Us*, let us
 be so for *Him*: What a severe Reproach is it
 for the idle and trifling Professor to be so active
 for the World and Flesh, and yet so dull and
 sluggish for God and Heaven?

(6.) CHRIST may be called the SUN in
 Respect of his Communicativeness. The Sun
 distributes Blessings, Light and Warmth, from
 one End of the Earth to the other; and thereby
 produces Food, Health, and Comfort: He vi-
 sits every Year each of the Poles in their
 Turn; and the greatest Part of the World is
 every Day refreshed by his Influences: He li-
 berally diffuses Blessings wheresoever He comes;
 and all the learned agree that he is placed in the
 Heavens in such a Position, as is best fitted
 for general Service.

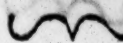
In this He is a glorious Resemblance of our
Lord Jesus Christ: The Spirit of God dwells
without Measure in Him, and of his *Fulness* we
all receive, and Grace for Grace; that is, Grace
 is communicated to his Saints answerable to
 the several Graces of the Spirit that He is
 invested

invested with, just as the Members, Limbs, SERM.
and Senses of a Child answer to those of a Fa- XIII.
ther. *John i. 6. He received Gifts for Men, and*
He as freely distributes them as He received
them. He sends these down into the World
and Church by his Spirit and Gospel. His Me-
rits are of a large Extent, and these He dis-
penses freely to all that trust in Him. He has
appointed that his Gospel shou'd be preached
to every Creature, and has assured us, *them that*
come unto Him He will in no wise cast out. He
invites them to come that they may live and
have Rest for their Souls, *Mat. xi. 28. He is*
exalted to be a Prince and Saviour, to give Re-
pentance unto Israel, and Forgiveness of Sins, Acts
v. 31. He gives it as a royal Donative, allud-
ing to the Medals that are thrown among the
Populace at the Coronation of a Prince.

Now here is Comfort to the poor Christian;
the Graces of God in *Jesus Christ* are no more
sold and purchased than the Light of the SUN
is: The Sun is one of the greatest Friends to
the Poor, so is Jesus Christ: Look to this Sa-
viour, Christians, amidst all the deep Sense of
Want and Poverty wherewith you are oppressed:
There's enough in Him to supply every Need,
and He is always ready to bestow it: Be but
sensible of your own Poverty and Emptiness,
and sincerely willing to be relieved, and then
you need not fear being neglected or overlook-
ed by Him.

SERM.

(7.) He is called the SUN in Respect of that
XIII. Light which He sheds. It's by the Rays of


 this glorious Body, the Sun, stretched forth as
 so many Wings that we see, or use the things
 about us. Light is so excellent a Thing that
 the great God has described Himself by it:
 What Light is to the World, *that*, and *more*
 than that is Jesus Christ to Sinners: He is
 the Light, the best and most useful Light, *the*
true Light, the Light of the World: Fallen
 Man was in Darkness, a most uncomfortable
 and dangerous Estate; and there He must have
 wearied Himself in feeling after God, till He
 had sunk into everlasting Darkness, had not
 this SUN risen upon Him. He came from his
 Father with Light to teach us, to know God
 and our selves; our Relation to Him as our
 Creator, and the Offence we had given Him;
 to know our selves as his Creatures who were
 fallen from Him, under his Resentment, and
 incapable of his Favour and Happiness; to
 know our Duty, and in what Way we may be
 relieved: He came also to heal our distem-
 per'd Faculties: The Light that He brings is
 every way answerable to our Case, proper to
 relieve and comfort, and guide the wandering
 Mind to God and Blessedness. By this Light
 let *Us* walk and work.

(8.) He may be called the SUN with respect
 to Life and Influence. The Sun has a refresh-
 ing Warmth whereby inanimate Fruits are rais-
 ed, and made to grow and flourish. Its this
 Heat

Heat that stirs the Moisture of the Ground, that moves the Juices of the Plants, and makes them rise and flow. By this the Air, and Flowers, and Trees are revived. SERM.
XIII.

The Sun of Righteousness alone can inspire dead Sinners with Life: He only can raise them up to spiritual Sense, Motion, and Activity: It is He that both warms and enlivens them with his Love and Spirit: He makes the Heart that was hard and congeal'd like a Rock of Ice, to flow and relent: He recovers the Use of those Powers that were benumbed: It's his Influence and Warmth that must dissolve and molify the Spirit, and make it flow either in Tears of godly Sorrow, or holy Joy and Thankfulness. The Heat of the SUN raises new Plants from Seed, and recovers those that seem'd to lie dead in Winter; so the *Lord Jesus Christ* makes the Soul that was dead in Sin to live, and look towards its God, and mourn after Him: He brings back his People and revives them, when they are stunned with Temptations and grievous Falls, and seem to be almost dead; He then makes them to spring again and bring forth Fruit. Let them who feel the Want of these Influences, look to Him and beg for spiritual Life; and let those who have it, seek to Him that they may have it more abundantly. Hence learn,

(1.) How much we owe to the Influence of this SUN of Righteousness, as He is placed in the Heavens above us. It was the Ignorance

SERM. of our Lords Disciples that they wished his bo-
 XIII. dily stay with them: The Spirit was not to

be given till Jesus was ascended, and as a King enthroned; and then this Royal Donative was to be confer'd upon them, and to be present with them in a Way of peculiar Agency; to enlighten, quicken, strengthen, and comfort them; to make them like to God and meet for Heaven. This SUN in the Heavens sends down his Spirit to breathe upon the Saints, in their Secret Retirements, in their private and publick Worship, and by afflictive and merciful Providences: To Him we owe the Audience of our Prayers, and the Acceptance of our Persons and Services with God.

(2.) Let us readily own CHRIST and his Influences in all the Good we have and do. Let us own Him as the Author of our Illumination, Conviction, Conversion, and Consolation: It's from Him all our Strength is derived for spiritual Work and Service: Its He who makes us lively and fruitful: Its He who prevents our Falling, and restores us when we *are* fallen: It's He that keeps us from Temptation, or finds a way for our Escape: It's He that keeps our Souls awake, and rouseth us out of our spiritual Sloth and Drowsiness: Its He that softens the Heart and makes it tender; that corrects or prevents its Hardness. If there be any Warmth, Relish or Savour, in the Word and Sacraments, or any Pleasure in our Attendance upon them, it's all derived from Him. If we have

have any Joy in Mercies, any support under Afflictions, or Advantage by them; if we are getting any Strength against our Corruptions, or Victory over them, let us go to CHRIST with our most grateful Acknowledgments: The Glory of all is *his*; CHRIST is *all in all* and all in *every thing* that relates to our Recovery and Salvation.

(3.) IF CHRIST be *the Sun of Righteousness*, it's plain He can receive nothing from Us. What is it that we can do for the SUN in the Heavens that Shines upon us continually? Its not the more bright and glorious for our seeing it, or for the Earths being made beautiful by it: It don't shine because *we see it*, but *we see it* because it Shines. The Blessed Jesus does not bestow any thing upon us, as expecting or wanting any Thing back again from us: Neither the Love and Service, nor the Rebellion and Hatred of Men or Angels can any Way affect Him: They may do *themselves* good by serving Him, but they can do *Him* none: He can receive nothing from us in Return for all that He is doing for us.

(4.) What Cause have we to bless God for *Jesus Christ*? He is the SUN in this dark and benighted World. The Psalmist calls upon us again and again to praise God for making the Sun to rule by Day; but what Praise is due to *the Father of Mercies*, to *the Father of Lights*, for giving his own Son to be *the Sun of Righteousness*? He gave Him to be the Light of the

SERM.

XIII.

World, and so the Life of it: He has thus delivered us from *the Power and Kingdom of Darkness*: The World wou'd have been a *Dungeon* without the Sun, but it had been a *Hell* without Christ: What Thanks is due to the Son of God that He wou'd become the Light of the World? He is *the Brightness of his Fathers Glory, the express Image of his Person*, and yet condescended to *take upon Him the Form of a Servant*, and be *made of no Reputation*: Though He was *in the Form of God*, yet He did not covet to appear as God, *Philip. ii. 6.* It's true being the Light of the World is an Office and Honour *too great* for any meer Creature, but it is *infinitely beneath* Him as God; and He undertook this Office too, for such as neither deserved this, nor any other Favour at his Hands, but are wicked and ungrateful Despisers of his Grace.

(5.) What high Thoughts shou'd we have of CHRIST and ardent Desires after Him? The Glory of the SUN throws a Shade upon all other created Glories; but *the Sun of Righteousness* is one that speaketh to this Sun, and it shineth not. No created Glory can be compared with his: Let the Consideration of his infinite Superiority raise our Minds to the highest Esteem of Him, and make us earnestly aspire after an Interest in Him, that *We* may stand in a special Relation to Him, and He may be concerned in a particular Manner for us as his own People: It will be our Honour and Happiness

Happiness to live under his Light and Influence: This will be all in all to us, and infinitely better than any created Good: Let us therefore implore his Spirit for enlightening, quickening, and comforting Grace, that we may grow and flourish, and *bring forth much Fruit.* SERM. XII.

(6.) If CHRIST be a SUN, what an Encouragement is this to poor Souls to come to Him and trust in Him? He whose Power and Influence is so vastly extensive, may be applied to with great Confidence and Expectation. What if your Necessities be exceeding great and many? They don't exceed his Capacity to supply them. *One Sun* enlightens many Lands, and a great many more Plants, and Trees, and Herbs at once; and if there be never so many and various Wants in your Souls He can supply them all. What if you can make no Return? He expects none from you in Proportion to what you receive, nor that his Favours shou'd be purchased. Let not your Unworthiness then be your Discouragement: Only know your Need of what He has to bestow, and thankfully accept it.

(7.) We may hence learn what Need we have of Christ more than of the SUN in the Heavens. It were better not to see the Sun, than not to know the *Sun of Righteousness*. Indeed the World wou'd be but an uncomfortable Place without the Light of the Sun: We shou'd be always in great Fear and Danger without *this* Light; but much greater wou'd our Souls be in, without the

SERM. Light of this Sun of Righteousness: What

XIII. Hopes cou'd we have of Mercy and Reconciliation with an offended God without the *Lord Jesus Christ*? We as much need the fresh Supplies of his Spirit, as the returning Sun every Morning.

(8.) Let us value and improve the Light of this Sun, *the Sun of Righteousness*. The wicked and vile delight to cover themselves in Darkness; they *hate the Light and come not to it because their Deeds are Evil*. They therefore who despise this Light may well be reckoned blind in sinful Ignorance, or hardened in Obstinacy and Wickedness. Let us dread least this be the Character of any of us: Shall God bestow so choice a Blessing, and we make no Account of it? Shall it stand to light and guide us, and we make no Use of it? Let us remember the *Night is coming*, when the Light shall be accounted for; when many shall wish in vain that they had valued and improved it at a higher Rate: Besides our neglecting it may provoke Him to withdraw his Blessing and Influence, and then the Light of this *Sun of Righteousness* will avail us little.

I proceed to consider in the next Place,

[2.] On what Accounts He is called *the Sun of RIGHTEOUSNESS*, and He is so called.

(1.) Because He is righteous himself. He is personally righteous, *the holy one and the just, a Lamb without Blemish and without spot, neither was any Guile found in his Mouth*: He lived free
from

from all Pollution, and fulfilled all Righteousness: The divine Nature in the Son of God was originally, necessarily, absolutely righteous; and the Humane Nature was without any actual Defilement either of Soul or Body.

(2.) He was righteous as *Mediator*. That is, He did all that his Father appointed, or He himself undertook. He conformed Himself to the Command He had received; exactly obeyed the Law, and bore all that which Justice required as a Satisfaction for Sin, to deliver the Sinner from deserved Wrath, to make Him righteous in the Sight of God, and to merit for Him eternal Life. When He bowed his Head upon the Cross, He said, *It is finished*; and He told the Jews, that whatsoever things He had received of the Father, He delivered unto them.

(3.) He may be called the *Sun of Righteousness* as He makes us righteous. *This is the Name whereby He shall be called, the Lord our Righteousness*, Jer. xxxiii. 16. And elsewhere, *surely shall one say, in the Lord have I Righteousness and Strength*, Isa. xlv. 24. This is the Office and Business of CHRIST to make us righteous: And this He does two Ways,

1. By his *Righteousness imputed* to us: That is, what He did and suffer'd on the Behalf of Sinners, is so placed to their Account through Faith in Christ, that they are deem'd righteous by the Gospel and treated as such: The Righteousness indeed, is *personally Christs*, and *ours relatively*: It's *his* by Operation; He wrought this

SERM. this Righteousness, merited, and purchased it;
 XIII. but it's *ours by Imputation*; that is, for the
 ~~~~~ sake of this Righteousness that is performed  
 by Christ, and trusted in by us, and imputed  
 to us by God, we are saved from everlasting  
 Ruin, and made to inherit everlasting Life.  
 But then further,

2. He makes us righteous by his *Spirit* given to us. This is called our *personal* or *inherent* Righteousness by Divines, which is made up of gracious Habits, or Dispositions of Soul to that which is good; and of those holy Duties which the Believer performs in Obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ: Both these, Righteousness imputed to us, and wrought in us by the Spirit, come from Christ: It's the former, (the Righteousness of Christ,) that merits Grace and Favour for us; the latter (Righteousness inherent) that is our Preparation for Communion with God here, and the everlasting Enjoyment of Him hereafter. I have only to observe, that these two are never separated; and that *the one* is properly called our *Justification*, *the other* our *Sanctification*.

*Reflection.* (1.) Hence we see where Righteousness is to be sought and found. There is but *one Sun of Righteousness*; and let not us, (as if we were ignorant of the Righteousness of God,) go about to establish a Righteousness of our own. We may as well seek another SUN for the World, as another Righteousness besides this in the Lord Jesus Christ. *Original Righteousness*

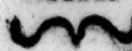
ness we have lost; and have neither Strength, nor Knowledge, nor Inclination to gain one:

The thing indeed is impossible in it's own Nature; but here is a Way opened in the Gospel; *Jesus Christ the righteous is a Propitiation for our Sins*, and *God may be just, though He is the Justifier of them that believe in Jesus*. As the Ivy is weak in itself, but by the twining Grasp with which Nature has furnished it, takes hold of the Oak and rests on that; so by Faith must we rest on the *Lord Jesus Christ*, and be upheld by Him. Say then, *In the Lord Jesus have I Righteousness and Strength*: This is the Rock upon which you may build with safety; but then you must renounce all Pretensions to Righteousness elsewhere.

*Reflect.* (2.) How shou'd this endear the *Lord Jesus Christ* to us? What Praise, what Love, what Gratitude, what thankful Service ought we to render for such a Mercy? Our Souls were dead *in Sin*, and dead *in Law*; and nothing but such a Righteousness provided cou'd be their Relief. The Righteousness of **CHRIST** was the Price of their Redemption.

*Reflect.* (3.) Remember this *Sun of Righteousness* does not arise to all. It is only to them that *fear his Name*: He is a *Rock of Offence* to many, though He be the Light of the World; but to them that fear Him and believe in Him; to those whom He sanctifies and renews by his Spirit, and enables to walk in the Ways of Holiness; (unto such, I say, and only such,)

SERM. is He made of God Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption. Which leads me to

 consider another Part of the Words: Namely

II. The Character of those to whom *the Sun of Righteousness shall arise*: They are such as *fear his Name*.

I shall here give some Account of the Passion of Fear; apply this to the Name of God or Christ; and then shew why religious Persons are described by this Character. And

[1.] Let it be observed, that this Passion of Fear is implanted in us by the great Author of our Natures, as a Principle of Self-Preservation. By this we are alarmed at the Apprehension of Danger coming upon us, and are quickened to use Means to keep it off and guard against it. Fear has for its Object *some Evil* we apprehend will come upon us, or *some Good* we are in Danger of losing; and our Fears are awakened in Proportion to the Nature and Degree of these Objects. Let us then in the next Place,

[2.] Apply this to the Business of Religion; or to the Name of God. The Name of God, I suppose, is here put for God Himself: The good Man has a Reverence for the Name of God; He is a Being of infinite and adorable Perfections, and therefore his *very Name* shou'd not be mention'd lightly, lest Men forget the infinite Distance they are at from Him. The Fear of God in Scripture is usually put for the whole  
of



of Religion, of which it is an eminent Branch: I don't mean by it a Superstitious dread of God, as a Cruel, Arbitrary, Tyrannical Being, that is easily provoked by his Creatures, and hardly appeased or reconciled; but that awful Regard to Him which arises in the Heart while we consider our selves as made and supported by Him, as living and acting in the Sight of God the great Governour of the World, who is a Being of perfect Justice and unspotted Purity, who sees all we think and do, and cannot be imposed upon. When we have so great and high a Sense of the divine Perfections as to think it highly fit and proper, that *his* Will shou'd be regarded preferably to all others, and that He shou'd not on any Account be offended or displeased; when we think it unjust and unreasonable to act contrary to his Will and Law; when we have such a Regard to God as greatness his Favour and Wrath, and leads us to a Holy Care to forbear what He disapproves, and to do what He requires; *then* our Fear may be said to be truly religious and genuine. Fear is not the Off-spring of base and dishonourable, but of high and worthy Thoughts of God; such as not only restrain from Sin, but lead to Duty; and this not meerly from a Dread of Punishment, but from an Apprehension of the Fitness and Reasonableness of the Thing, I now proceed to shew,

[3.] Why the truly religious Man is described

SERM. scribed by this Character; one that feareth the  
 XIII. Name of God. And the Reason may be,

~~~~~ (1.) Because the Fear of the Lord is the very Beginning of Religion. Hence Religion in the Hearts of Men ordinarily takes its Rise: The dread of God and his Justice falls upon them; they are convinced of their Sin against God, and his Wrath against them; and the stronger Light of Conviction breaks in upon their Minds, the higher their Fears of Wrath arise: They see the great God provoked to Anger, and justly offended; they see as it were his fiery Vengeance kindled and ready to seize upon them; and having nothing to appease this offended God with, they stand and tremble, and view his Greatness; they revere his Justice, and think then of returning like the Prodigal: *I perish for Hunger, and will therefore arise and go to my Father.* But again,

(2.) When the religious Man is described by the Fear of God, it may intimate to us that this is the lowest Grace. The other Graces are not such proper Characteristicks or Notes of Religion, because *all* religious Men cannot be so sensible of the other, as they are of this. Other Graces are of a higher, more excellent, and perfect Nature; but the Grace of Fear is preparatory; it leads the Way to others, and is the Means of their Preservation and Quickening.

(3.) Fear is an abiding Grace. And therefore *Fearing God, and keeping his Commandments,*

is said to be the *whole of Man*, Eccles. xii. 13. God is said to put this Fear in his Peoples Hearts that *they shall not depart from Him*, Jer. xxxii.

40. It goes through, and mingles with all the good Man does; therefore it is said, *happy is the Man that feareth always*, Prov. xxviii. 14.

And this is a Principle inculcated in the Gospel too: We are bid to *Work out our Salvation with Fear and Trembling*, Phil. ii. 12. We who have begun the Christian Work, and Warfare must go on with it to the End, or Work it out, (as well as begin it) *with Fear and Trembling*. And there will be great Occasion for this in the Christian Life, till we arrive at that World where *perfect Love shall cast out Fear*. Indeed, Fear does many Times help the Christian, when other Things wou'd not move Him.

(4.) Fear is essential to true Religion. *The Fear of the Lord, that is Wisdom*, or in other Words, true Religion, Job xxviii. 28. Though the Love of God, and Faith in Him, make up a great and noble Part of true Religion, yet not the whole of it. *God is great and greatly to be feared, and to be had in Reverence of all that draw near unto Him*. An awful Veneration of God as Holy, Righteous, Just, and True, is a Homage due to the great Governour of the World who observes what we do now, and has Rewards and Punishments to dispense hereafter. Whatever Condescension the most high God is pleased to treat us with, our Infinite Distance from Him, as Creatures and Sinners,

SERM. ners, ought always to be thought of with the
 XIII. profoundest Reverence, Another Reason may
 be this, because,

(5.) Fear is the great Means or Instrument of the good Man's Preservation and Growth. While we have so much remaining Corruption in us; while Flesh, and Sense, and the World have so much Influence upon us; we shall always need the Assistance of a holy Fear and Awe of God. Indeed while we are here, we often find our selves more powerfully moved by our Fears than any thing else: It's Fear puts us upon Resistance or Flight; and this is often a great Spur to Diligence, and so a Means of our spiritual Improvement and Growth.

Reflect. 1. You may here take Notice that there is no Degree of true Grace in the People of God but He observes it, and is pleased with it, though it be of the lowest sort, only a Fearing Him. God does not *despise the Day of small things*; He will not *break the bruised Reed, nor quench the smoking Flax*, Though it be not with such Souls Broad-Day-Light, yet *the Darkness is past, and the Day-spring from on high hath visited them*. Your Fear is made Use of as a Means of Your Preservation, and you wou'd be undone to all Intents and Purposes without it. You are full of Fears, and therefore doubt you have not Faith, Indeed your Fears are an Argument of the Weakness and Imperfection of your Faith, but not of the Absence of it.

Reflect.

Reflect. 2. Let us see to it that we be such SERM.
as fear the Name of God. Let us labour after a XIII.
deep and settled Reverence of Him upon our
Hearts, and dread doing any thing unworthy
of, or unbecoming his glorious Majesty. Let
us have a Care lest this Fear degenerate into
a servile Fear of the most high God, as a hard
and rigorous Being: This wou'd be certainly
unworthy of Him. Allow me therefore to offer
a Hint or two whereby you may know whe-
ther your Fear be right or not.

(1.) If your Fear be right it will set you to
Work, and make you diligent. *They that fear*
the Lord, will obey the Voice of his Servant, Isa.
1. 10. This will lead you also to hate and op-
pose Sin of every Sort: It is said of *Job.* that
He feared God and eschewed Evil, Job i. 1. This
is joined with *Purity of Heart,* Isa. viii. 13.
Sanctify the Lord of Hosts himself, and let Him
be your Fear, and let Him be your Dread.

(2.) A right Fear of God is attended with
a Fear of displeasing Him because He is good
and gracious, as well as because He is great and
powerful. We find fearing the Lord, and his
Goodness put together, *Hosea* iii. 5. And else-
where the Psalmist says, *There is Forgiveness*
with God that He may be feared, Psal. cxxx. 4.

Here this Sermon may be Divided.

I come now to consider the,

III. (And last Part of the Words, Namely)

A 2

The

SERM. The Promises made to such as *fear his Name*:

XIII. *The Sun of Righteousness shall arise unto them with Healing in his Wings, and they shall go forth and grow up as Calves of the Stall.*

THE FIRST THING promised is, that *He shall arise unto them*. And here I wou'd shew

[1.] What is meant by his *arising*.

[2.] That He certainly *will arise* to them that fear Him. And

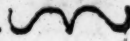
[3.] When this may be expected.

[1.] I would shew what is meant by the *Sun of Righteousness ARISING*.

And hereby there are two obvious Notions pointed out to us.

(1.) That He shall bring Light to them who were in Darknes. Some Light they *have had already* from *Moses and the Prophets*; but this was like the first Dawnings of the Day, an obscure and imperfect Light.

(2.) It shall bring Comfort to them who are in a disconsolate State. This is what I design chiefly to take Notice of here, it being, (as I suppose,) chiefly intended in the Text: Accordingly I shall observe, that it's no uncommon Case for them who fear God's Name to be in Heaviness, and that oftentimes their Nights are not only very dark, but tedious for the Length of them. This is supposed elsewhere by the Prophet, Isa. l. 10. *Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that walketh in Darknes, and hath no Light? Let Him trust in the Name*

Name of the Lord, and stay upon his God. To SERM.
such there shall arise Light in Obscurity, and XIII.
their Darknes shall be as the Noon-day. Chap. 
lviii. 10.

[2.] I am to shew that He certainly will arise to such.

(1.) *He can do it.* He is *able* to comfort them; and if He speak but the Word, this chearing Light shall break in upon the Mind of the dejected Saint, as certainly as the Light broke out, when the God of Nature said at first, *Let there be Light.* He can silence the Fears and resolve the Doubts of a desponding Soul, and administer such Cordials as shall revive his Spirits, and put Sorrow from his Heart. If He speaks but the Word, and shews himself to the Soul as its reconciled God, *sorrow and sighing shall flee away.*

(2.) *He loves them that fear his Name.* He has *betrothed them to himself*, and his Tenderness will not bear that they shou'd be always sorrowing, as if there was no Consolation or Comforter to be found. He who is the Head of the Saints has a Sympathy, a *Fellow-feeling*, with them; and his Love will put him upon relieving all their Sorrows: But then the Manifestations of his Love are all regulated by infinite Wisdom and Counsel, so as may be most for his Glory and their Good.

(3.) *He has promised* He will arise. This makes the thing certain; He will not fail to perform every thing He has undertaken for

SERM. his People; his Promises are not vain and de-
 XIII. lusive Words; *He hath said, and shall He not*
 do it? It was *his Love* to them that led him
 to make the Promise, and this Love is unchange-
 able: His Faithfulness and Love, bind him to
 the Performance of it.

(4.) *His Honour* is much concerned in this.
 He will *therefore* make it appear, that He is
 a Gracious God; that it is not in vain to look
 after Him, and to refuse some other *lower* Com-
 forts, in Expectation of those He gives his Ser-
 vants. He appears thus to be *a Refuge for the*
distressed: It's an Encouragement to Sinners to
 hope and trust in *Him who has Compassion on the*
unworthy: He will lead them more highly to
 esteem, more affectionately to love Him, and
 and more confidently to trust in Him; and
 this will be greatly to the Honour of his Name.

I now come in the next Place to enquire,

[3.] When this ARISING may be expect-
 ed: Which indeed is a material Question for
 those to ask, who have been long bowed down
 with Sorrow. And though we *must* say to such,
 it is uncertain *when*; yet this we are sure of,
 that it *will be* most certainly, sooner or later,
 and perhaps a great Deal sooner many Times
 than they expect or imagine. But there are
 some particular Seasons when this *Sun of Righte-*
ousness does often arise; as

(1.) When poor dejected Spirits are humbly
 waiting upon Him in his Ordinances. They
 endeavour to meet Him in the Way wherein
 He

He ordinarily Walks. He there waits to be-
flow Blessings, and if they wait to receive them,
it is very likely they shall not miss of them.

The *Lords Day* is often the Time which God
puts this Honour upon: God has not only sanc-
tified his Sabbath, but He has blessed it, made
it a good Day, a Day wherein He will bestow
Blessings more liberally than on other Days:
The Apostle St. John was in the Spirit on the
Lords-Day; Rev. i. 10. How often do the Peo-
ple of God go to his House Sorrowful, and
come away rejoicing? If there be any Breath-
ings of the Spirit, when shou'd they be but on
that Day, and where but in the Assemblies of
his *Saints*? Sometimes in *private Devotion* their
Hearts are warmed and comforted, raised and
fixed: Sometimes the Preacher is made the *Son*
of *Consolation*: The glorious Testimonies born
to our Lord at his Baptism, and Transfigura-
tion, were at Devotion: *Jacob* saw the Face
of God, when He wept and made Supplicati-
on: And if you who have walked heavily for
a long Time, and are waiting for Consolation
wou'd obtain it, you can have no better Di-
rection than what you find in the Song of So-
lomon, Chap. i. Ver 8. *Go thy Way forth by the*
Foot-steps of the Flock, and feed thy Kids be-
side the Shepherds Tents: There the comforting
chearing Presence of the great Redeemer is to
be sought and found.

(2) The Sun of Righteousness has often risen
with divine Consolations unto those who fear

SERM. his Name, when they have been enlarged in
 XIII. an uncommon Degree of Fervency and Earnest-
 ness in seeking it. At such a Time as this, when the very Soul is breathed out after divine Communications, then we have the strongest Sense of our own Wants, the most humbling Sense of our own Unworthiness, and the most entire Dependance upon the Grace of God for the Favour we ask; then we are best fitted to give God the Praise of it if we receive it, and best fitted to be tender of it and treat it carefully: A Soul in such a Frame is best disposed to receive Mercy, and no wonder God oftentimes affords it at such a Season. When *Jacob had wrestled all Night with God*, He had a comfortable *Vision* in the Morning. But again,

(3.) Another Season of his Arising is, either before, in, or after some severe and sharp Trial. When God has hard Service for his People to perform, and severe Trials to go through, He ordinarily appoints them some Manifestations of his Love and Favour to dispel their Fears, to bear them up under the Weight, and carry them through all the Fatigue of the Trial. Thus it was with *Jacob*, when He was going that long and tedious Journey to churlish *Laban*, (Gen. xxviii.) And the Spirit descended upon our Lord like a Dove, just before He entered upon his Temptations, and publick Ministry. Sometimes these Comforts are sent just in the very Height of Trouble: Thus it was with *Stephen*, *He saw Heaven opened, and the Son of Man*

Mau standing on the right Hand of God, Acts SERM. VII. 56. And thus it was with the *three Chil-* XIII. *dren* in the fiery Furnace; they had a fourth Person with them *like unto the Son of God*; Paul and Silas cou'd sing when their Feet were fast in the Stocks: *The Spirit of God and of Glory* oftentimes sits and rests on his suffering People, 1 *Pet.* iv. 14. And sometimes these Cordials are reserved for a Support to their Spirits immediately after the Trial is over: The Child is oftentimes born immediately after the severest Throw.

(4.) Sometimes these favourable Manifestations are designed to signify Gods well-pleasedness, with some eminent Service we have done for Him. Thus when *Abraham* had given such a glorious Proof of the Strength of his Faith, that He cou'd offer up his only Son, the Son of the Promise, and was ready to do it; God immediately breaks forth with the highest Degree of Pleasure and Satisfaction, *I have sworn by my self, that in Blessing I will bleſs, thee, &c.* (Gen. xxii. 16, 17.) But supposing the Saint shou'd not be favoured with all these Seasons of divine Manifestation, yet

(5.) He very often finds it when He comes to the Sides of the Grave. Before *Moses* was to die, He must ascend *Mount Nebo*, and have a Prospect of the *Land of Canaan*. *Stephen* saw Heaven opened just as He was breathing out his Soul. When God has suffer'd his Servants to walk most of their Days here in a

SERM. Gloom, and under Discouragements, He often
XIII. causes it to be light about *Even-tide*. It is a

very awful thing to die; for a Man to leave all that is delightful here, and to enter upon a World He knows very little of; to appear before the Judge of all, and have his State fixed for ever: The Saint wants something to support Him in the View of Death, and in his Passage through it, and oftentimes God sends Him as it were a *Taste of the Fruit of Canaan* while He is *on this side Jordan*, that he may not be affrighted at the Difficulties that surround Him, but comforted with the Prospects of what He hopes to meet with *on the other Side*. But however,

(6.) *Beyond Death the Sun of Righteousness* will certainly and gloriously arise upon them. Whilst we are here in the present World, we are said to *embrace* the Promises by Faith; but when we land in the other World, then we *inherit* them. Here we are oftentimes treated as Children in Minority, and it may be are *kept short* of many Comforts; but by Death we come to full Age and take *Possession* of them. When once *Faith* is done away, *Sight* and Enjoyment will take Place for ever. There will be no more Darkness or Gloom, Frights or Fears. *The Sun of Righteousness* will shine, all bright and unclouded, upon the Blessed above. There are a great many Promises that are not fulfilled to the Saint in this World, but after Death they shall receive their full Accomplishment. There
are

are a great many Persons in Scripture called BLESSED now, who have little Sense or Feeling of their Blessedness: viz. *Blessed are the poor in Spirit; for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are they that Mourn; for they shall be comforted, &c.* Mat. v. 3, 4. Such as these are now pronounced Blessed, and Faith assures them that they have a Right to Blessedness; but they have no Possession, Taste, or Feeling of it: But when JESUS shall appear as the Judge of all; when the Saints shall be gathered, owned, and acquitted by Him, and declared his, and bid to enter into their Lords Joy; then indeed will the Sun of Righteousness arise upon them in full and satisfying Glory. Now from hence we may fairly collect,

1st. That good People must not expect to be exempted from Sorrows while they are here: No, not from spiritual Sorrows. They may expect many a sad and gloomy Day; they have a great Deal of Sin and Corruption within them, and many Temptations from Earth and Hell without them; hereby they are greatly defiled, and much interrupted in their Service of God and Communion with Him; and no Wonder, if when they Sin, their Father Frowns: They can often say with a great deal of Propriety, *I am the Man that hath seen Affliction*; and our Lord hath told us that *in the World we shall have Trouble, but in him we shall have Peace*; but these Trials, remember, are for the refining of Gods People; He thus prepares them for that

SERM. that glorious and joyful Day when *the Sun of*
XIII. *Righteousness shall arise* upon them. This is the
 ~~~~~ Fruit of their Sorrow to take away Sin, and fit  
 them for Comfort and Joy.

2dly. They may also assuredly expect happy  
 Days. *The Sun of Righteousness SHALL arise*  
 unto them. They may very probably have  
 many a sweet and ravishing Taste of the Good-  
 ness of God while here on Earth: There are  
 few Christians but meet with *that* some Time  
 or other, of which they can say, *It is more to*  
*be desired than Gold, yea than find Gold: Sweet-*  
*er also than Honey, or the Honey Comb, &c.*  
 One Hours sweet Communion with God under  
 lively and comfortable Hopes that He is our  
 God in *Jesus Christ*; one satisfying View of  
 our Relation to him and Interest in Him, is e-  
 nough to compensate many Days, and Weeks,  
 and Months Sorrow. But how many or few  
 these will be, or what *Degrees* of Joy we shall  
 be able to attain to, none can say: Though  
 we may desire and seek after this; yet our  
 Desires shou'd be moderated, and we shou'd be  
 submissive to the Will of God in this very  
 thing: But however, if we have no happy  
 Days on Earth, there is a State to come, where  
*Light is sown for the righteous, and Joy for the*  
*upright in Heart*; pure Light, and perfect Joy;  
 and *these* shall reign for evermore: The Sun  
 shall shine without a Cloud, and never go  
 down.

3dly. Hence

3dly. Hence collect that the Foundation of true Comfort is laid in the Fear of God. The Promise is made only to such: *Unto you that fear my Name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise.* Grace and Comfort are linked together. True and lasting Comfort, or well grounded Peace, is never to be found but where there is Grace: There may be a false Peace indeed; but that will vanish, and leave the poor Wretch miserably disappointed: And where ever there is true Grace there will undoubtedly be Peace and Comfort.

4thly. Learn hence, what a wide Difference there is betwixt the Joys and Sorrows, of Saints and Sinners. There ariseth to the Godly *Light in Darkness.* When He is *distressed*, (as the Apostle speaks,) *he is not utterly cast down*: When He is in *Perplexity*, yet not in *Despair*. There is some inward secret Stay by which the Soul is held up and supported; and when it is worst with him, he is like to Holy Job, who could bless God when He deprived him of his Mercies, as well as when He bestowed them; and not like Saul, who sunk down when he received the bad News, and had no more Spirit left. His Joy is like the Sun; though it be obscured, yet it conveys some sort of Influence.

5thly. Let this revive the Heart of the contrite Ones. Let them pray, and hope, and wait, and trust; *not casting away their Confidence, for it shall have great Recompense of Reward.* Their Sun may be clouded, but it cannot perish: It may



SERM. may set, but it cannot be lost for ever: Don't

**XIII.** therefore in your worst Circumstances, act as  
 ~~~~~ if you had no Hope, but cherish Expectations  
 of returning Light. Lie at the *Mercy Seat*,
 humble your selves greatly before God, justify
 Him in all his Dealings with you, and beg the
 Return of those chearing Rays of *the Sun of*
Righteousness. Say, " Lord, art not Thou the
 " great source of Light and Comfort? Hast
 " thou not promised to rise upon them that
 " fear thee? I have *some Fear, some reveren-*
 " *tial Awe* of thy Majesty, though not so much
 " as I wou'd have: O, when shall that Light
 " visit me! I have seen and felt some of its
 " Rays: O, how chearing! How reviving! O,
 " when shall they return, and visit this deject-
 " ed Spirit of Mine, that feels so much the
 " Want of their benign Influence? I mourn
 " and lament after thee; O, *lift up my Soul,*
 " my dark disconsolate Soul, the chearing
 " *Light of thy Countenance*: However, enable
 " me to live in Hopes of such a Mercy: To
 " this End I commit my self to Thee, and ear-
 " nestly beg the illuminating reviving Influ-
 " ences of thy *good Spirit*."

I come now to consider THE SECOND PRO-
 MISE in the Text: Namely, He *shall arise*
unto such as fear his Name, WITH HEALING
 UNDER HIS WINGS, or in his Rays, which
 are stretched out from the Body of the Sun as
 Wings are from a flying Fowl. It will be need-
 ful here to premise the following Hints,

1. That

1. That all Mankind are in a diseased State, Though God made Man upright, yet He corrupted himself, and became distemper'd in all the Powers of his Soul, subject not only to the Death of the Body, but to everlasting Death, or a final separation of the Soul from God. All Communion with Him was broken, and so his State became *diseased*: All his Powers are stained with Sin; his Understanding is become dark and ignorant in the Things of God; his Thoughts are vain and inconsiderate; his Will rebellious and disaffected to Goodness; his Heart hard; his Conscience seared and unfaithful; his Affections turbulent and disorderly: His various Appetites are not so subject to the rational Soul as they ought to be; and hence proceed innumerable disorderly Inclinations. He has a great many Appetites and Passions which lead him astray, and hereby the Distemper of his Soul is inflamed and heightened.

2. I observe further, that the Regenerate themselves, they who *fear Gods Name*, are not yet thoroughly healed. A great many Ailments and Complaints are to be found among *them*; and these, like the Sick in the Days of our Saviour, must come to him for a Cure. It is by his Skill, Power, and Kindness that they must *all* be relieved. What is the Language of our Attendance at the House of God this Day? Don't we wait here as so many impotent People *by the Pool-side*, in Hopes that the Waters will be moved, and suitable Relief afforded?

SERM.
XIII.

afforded? We cannot reckon up all those Diseases of the Mind which are imperfectly healed, any more than we can enumerate all the Diseases that the Body is subject to. We are all, even the best of us, Sick and diseased; and the most may say of themselves, as the Prophet did of Israel, *The whole Head is Sick, and the whole Heart is Faint; from the Crown of the Head to the Sole of the Foot there is no soundness in us,* Isa. i. 5, 6. Though the Saints are sanctified throughout, yet they are sanctified but in Part: There are Disorders in every Faculty, in every Grace, and in every holy Service. How many are weak and tender among us, as Infants? How many whose Knees are feeble, and whose *Hands hang down*? May we not find in ourselves a feverish Disorder; sometimes too hot, sometimes too cold? Some are falling; others wandering; some have a shaking unsteady Hand, like Persons in a Palsy; they can do nothing in the Service of God, but they feel themselves affected with Weakness and Unsteadiness: Others are benumbed, and cannot act or stir: Some are not enough sensible of their own Malady, while others are quite *bowed down with a Spirit of Infirmary*: some are but as Dwarfs in Christianity, and scarce grow at all after long standing. (It wou'd be endless to compare these with natural Distempers.) Some are roaring, with the Psalmist, and have their *Bones broken with their desperate Falls*. Some complain their Eyes are dim; they see and know

know but little: Others that their Hearts are hard, their Wills rebellious, their Passions turbulent, their Memories Slippery, their Consciences Dead and Drowfy, that Sloth and Pride mixes with all they do: Others are always mourning, complaining, and fearing: Other too confident and presumptuous: Some like Mutes, and cannot speak for God; while others do it out of Vanity or Conceit, and prejudice Religion by an apparent uncouth Affectation of it: Some, like the Man with a *withered Hand*, cannot Stretch it forth in any good Work; or if they do, it is in no Proportion to what they have: They make a mighty Account of a very little: And others, like a gross and corpulent Body, overloaded with worldly Cares, can scarce stir or act at all for Christ. These are the things I wou'd premise, and shall now consider

[1.] What this Healing does imply.

[2.] Shew that Christ *will* heal them that fear Him: And then

[3.] What Means He ordinarily makes Use of in doing this. I am to shew,

[1.] What this Healing does imply: And here I shall describe the Cure as carried on to Perfection.

(1.) Healing is a Discharge of ill Humours. That Corruption which is the Matter and Seed of Diseases in the Body, must be let out: Now, Lusts of all Sorts are such to the Soul, whether these Lusts consist of *Filthiness of Flesh*, or *Spirit*: While this Corruption remains, the Disorder

SERM. order will continue as it was: The Person will

XIII. remain Sick and Distemper'd; and there is as much Necessity that Lusts be discharged from the Soul, as that vicious Juices be removed from the Body. *These* are to be purged away. And Christ in healing Souls, does this in Order to make them sound. The Disorders of the Understanding are cured by Degrees: Spiritual Things are shewed to the Soul in a fairer and truer Light, and the Mind is better enabled to discern them. Those Degrees of Darkness that remain upon the Mind are removed, that so everlasting Things, (wherein Gods Honour and the Salvation of Souls does consist,) may be seen in a fuller Proportion: The Heart and Will are healed by Christ *the Sun of Righteousness*; their Disaffection to the Blessed God, his Son, and Gospel, and the holy Rules thereof, and to his Covenant, this is taken away: Immoderate excessive Fondness for fleshly Lusts, or worldly Gains, or an Over-Carefulness about present things is corrected: Pride of Heart is cured, and the Mind delivered from Unbelief and Unsteadiness, Confidence and Presumption: All these like so many ill Humours in the Body must be discharged; and *the Sun of Righteousness* in healing Souls doth deliver from them.

(2) Healing implies a Recovery of the Blood and Juices to a due Temperament. When the Fluids of *the Body* are restored to a proper State, then it gains Ground against Distemper,

and

and becomes more healthy. *The Soul* is healed, when the several Powers thereof become actually fitted and prepared for the several Exercises of their proper Graces in each Duty; when the Mind becomes disposed to receive divine Truth, apprehends it and sees it as it is, believes it, and considers it, and employs it self about it; when the Will likes the Proposals which Christ makes in the Gospel, chooses these, and sincerely complies with them, or at least endeavours to do so; when it is brought to love and desire as God directs; to fear and hate and mourn over and fly from that which is opposite to Him; and when it is ready to be employ'd with Chearfulness and Pleasure in what Way God shall appoint, so as to bring Honour to his Name and Credit to Religion.

(3.) In Consequence of what has been mentioned, there succeeds Ease. This is a Part of Healing: A Bone reduced grows Easy; ill Humours discharged leave the *Body* without Pain; And a faculty of the *Soul* is no less relieved, when it is brought into Place again. A Soul fixed on God is happy in Him: It's Separation from him is its Misery. When the Powers of the Soul are indisposed for a vigorous Exercise in the Business of Religion, it *must be uneasy*; for then it is, (like a Bone out of Joint,) unfit for that which it was made for, and which can only be its Happiness: And hence the Prophet says, *There is no Peace to the wicked; for they are like the troubled Sea which cannot rest, whose*

SERM. *Waters cast up Mire and Dirt*, Isa. lvii. 20. A

XIII. Soul that is enslaved to Sin is thereby unfit
 for Communion with God; It can have no
 Pleasure in loving God, or contemplating his
 Perfections: Lusts can yield it no Manner
 of Ease; but when the Soul is restored to God,
 it is then *returned to its Rest*.

(4.) Hereupon there will follow Strength
 and Vigour. This is another Part of Healing:
 The healed Person will be able to use the se-
 veral Powers of his Body or Mind to their
 proper Purposes: Whereas before, the Man
 cou'd do but little; cou'd Move, or Walk, or
 Work, but with Languor and Feebleness, or
 not at all; he can now move with Strength
 and Vigour; and according as the Cure is ad-
 vanced, will his Vigour in spiritual Service
 be: Before, He cou'd not pray, nor repent, nor
 examine himself, nor resist Temptations; he
 had no Command of his Appetites, nor any
 Government of his Passions; but when Christ
 has healed him, he can then, (in Proportion to
 the Degrees of Healing he has received,) do
 these things better: He finds himself disposed
 like a strong, vigorous Man to perform the Ac-
 tions of Life: He can now deny himself, and
 do, and suffer for CHRIST at another Rate
 than he cou'd before: He is *ready to every good
 Word and Work*.

(5) When this Healing is compleat, it is
 then attended with Vivacity and Chearfulness.
 He takes Pleasure in Action; does not love to
 sit

fit still: The healed Saint finds Alacrity in the Service of his Lord; it is his *Meat and Drink*, his chief Delight, his very Life, to be *doing the Will of his heavenly Father*: He loves to be doing for God; and *the more* Christ heals the Soul, *the better* pleased it is in doing for him.

(5.) This Healing is a Preservation from Death. It is a *spiritual* Healing: When the *Body* is healed, it is but for a while; it must quickly *return to the Dust* from whence it came: But they who are healed by *Jesus Christ* are saved *for ever*, from the *second Death*; So He himself speaks, John xi. 26. *Whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die*, or as it may and ought to be rendered, *shall not die for ever*. When the stroke of Death passeth upon their Bodies and they enter into the World of Spirits; they go into a State of higher and more perfect Life, where their Faculties are all enlarged and strengthened, and made fit for the most vigorous Exercise; and where they share the most ravishing Delights, such as will never suffer any Interruption, Period, or Decay. The Heaven where they dwell is the very Sphere of Lite and perfect Blessedness, and there they rejoice for evermore.

I come now to shew in the next Place,

[2.] That Christ *will* Heal them that fear him. We may be assured of this; for

(1.) The Father has called and appointed him to this as a Part of his Office. In this

SERM. Work He acts as his Fathers Servant, who has
 XIII. a Commission and Order what to do: This

was what the Prophet first of all declared concerning him, *Isa. lxi. 2.* And our Lord himself opened, and read this Commission, when he came into the World: It was his Fathers good Pleasure that he shou'd Heal those that were perishing in a diseased Estate: He sent his Son to seek and save them; sent him with proper Vouchers and clear Credentials: He has the broad Seal of Heaven with him; and he cou'd not be Faithful to his Father, if he did not heal them that fear him.

(2.) CHRIST has undertaken the Office. He wou'd never have assumed the Character, nor undertaken the Work if he had not intended to have gone through with it.

(3.) We are sure he is both willing and able to heal. He is therefore called our *merciful High Priest*. How often did he view the distemper'd State of Sinners with a tender Heart, and with melting Eyes? How often do we read of his having *Compassion on the Multitude*? What Pains did he take to heal the Bodies of Men? And we are sure he cannot want Inclinations to heal their Souls.

(4.) He has past his Word that he will do it. The Text expressly says so: *Unto you that fear my Name SHALL the Sun of Righteousness arise with Healing in his Wings:* And what else is implied in that kind Invitation of his, *Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden,*
 and

and I will give you Rest? Mat. xi. 28. What **SERM.**
means his Name JESUS, [a Saviour,] but this; **XIII.**
What else was the Design of his coming into
our World, but to *save Sinners*, to deliver from
those Calamities we are fallen under by Sin?
Or what is the Spirit given for, but to heal
our Sick and diseased Souls?

(5.) He both *has* healed, and *does* heal a great
many. What leprous Souls has he cleansed?
What slaves to Sin has he set free? What evil
Spirits has he cast out? What blind Eyes has
he opened? What hard Hearts has he changed?
What broken Bones has he healed? How many
Maladies have his People been labouring under,
which he has recovered them from? He has
healed many Sinners that appeared to others
far gone, and quite lost: Ministers and Friends
had given them up as Souls for whom there
was no Hope. He is daily performing Cures
upon Multitudes: The Tendernefs and Com-
passion which yearned in him whilst on Earth,
does so still, and his *Hand is not shortened that*
it cannot save. It was *He* that cured Davids
broken Bones, and made him to rejoice; (*Pfal.*
li. 8.) and it is he that scatters the Clouds which
hang over disconsolate Spirits, and restores
them to a Sense of divine Favour.

I proceed to consider,

[3.] By what Means He ordinarily *does* heal
the Souls of Men. And their Cure is affected,

(1.) By Means of his Ordinances. These
are in his Hands like the Instrument in the

SERM. Hand of a skilful Operator; though with this

XIII. Difference, that the Lord Jesus can effect the
 ~~~~~ Cure without them: But they are Means which  
 he will have distemper'd Souls attend upon;  
 they are there more ordinarily to expect his  
 Influence and Blessing, that they may know  
 their Dependance upon him, and be sensible  
 from whom the Cure comes.

He hath several of these Appointments by  
 which he heals: Sometimes He does it *by his  
 Word*; He thus opens the Eyes of the Blind,  
 makes the Scales to fly off from their Eyes,  
 and those that had no spiritual discerning before,  
 to see their spiritual Wants and Interests in a  
 plain and powerful Manner. *The Sacrament  
 of the Lords-Supper* is another Ordinance also  
 by which He heals the Souls of Men: They  
 oftentimes come trembling and fearful; with  
 a weak and wavering Faith; but they go away  
 encouraged and confirmed; they are able to  
 stand, and get Ground: Whilst almost faint-  
 ing, they feed upon Christ and revive: They  
 were Sick of Sin, and here they find Relief in  
*looking unto Jesus*: They were very unsteady  
 in their Christian Walk, and wanted Appe-  
 tite to sacred Food; but here they are streng-  
 thened to Walk, and disposed to receive the  
 most nourishing Food and best Refreshments:  
 It is here that they are oftentimes cured of their  
 worldly Sorrows and carnal Joys. And then  
*Prayer* is another Ordinance whereby he heals  
 distemper'd Souls: He has appointed his Peo-  
 ple

ple to wait upon him at the *Mercy-Seat* that SERM.  
they may receive what they want, and to spread **XIII.**  
all their Necessities before him, "I have this  
" and the other Distemper upon Me: such a  
" Faculty is out of Order: such a Grace is  
" weak and languid: There is such a Pain at  
" my Heart: such a sorrow lies upon my Mind."  
This humble Complaint the Saviour hears, and  
then he comes and asswages the Grief: He gives  
that Grace and Strength, that Comfort and  
Courage which is needful: He shines upon the  
Soul with the *Light of his Countenance*, and re-  
vives it under its Darkness and Despondency.  
Further, the *Communion of Saints* is another  
Method whereby He heals his People: Some-  
times He makes use of this as a means to awaken  
them out of their Lethargy, and quicken them  
under their spiritual Dullness and Sloth: Some-  
times the *Righteous smite their Friends*, and this  
is taken as a *Kindness*, Psal. cxli. 5. Sometimes  
they are informed what God has done for others,  
and are let into a farther Acquaintance with  
their own Diseases, and the Way of Cure: A  
dim and imperfect sight of Things has been  
relieved; a Cold Heart has been warmed; a  
weak Faith has been strengthened; a wound-  
ed Conscience healed; and that which has been  
turned out of the Way has been reduced.

(2.) He does it by his Merits and Interces-  
sion. *By his Stripes we are healed*: His Wounds  
are our Health: His Blood cleanseth the Soul  
that is polluted, and cools the Heart that is all



SERM. on Fire with the Sense of divine Wrath: It

XIII. heals and *binds up the broken Heart*, takes out

 the venomous Inclinations of those Souls that are stung with Satan's Malice, and quenches all his *fiery Darts*: This Blood has Virtue and Efficacy in it self, and no Distemper is too strong or desperate to be healed and relieved hereby: This has cured all the Diseases of a *Manasseh* or *Mary Magdalen*, and of many others whose Stories we read of in the sacred Books: Being *purged with this Hyssop*, we are made *clean*: This Blood was shed upon the Cross, and there offered to God for us; and he ever lives to plead the Merits of it before the Throne, that it may be applied to our Souls for their Relief and Comfort: *Him the Father heareth always*, and those whose Cause He undertaketh to plead, will be effectually relieved.

(3.) He heals by his Spirit. This is the great Purifier and Restorer; I mean, from the Stain and Filth of Sin: He enables the Soul to discharge its vicious and distemper'd Humours: It is this Spirit that Purges out the Pride and Hardness of our Hearts, that Cures our Enmity and Disaffection to the Blessed God, our Carnality, Sloth, Presumption, and Unbelief: It is the Spirit of Christ that gives the Soul Strength against the Remains of Sin, and enables us to subdue it: It is *his* Spirit that recovers our Faculties to their proper Strength and Vigour; that fits us for the Service of God; that enables us to exercise and improve Grace; that  
abate<sup>s</sup>

abates the Terror which arises from a Sense of **SUN**,  
Guilt and Wrath; that shews us the Remedy, **XIII**  
and helps us to apply it and take the Comfort  
of it.

*Refled.* 1. See here What Need there is that  
the Saints should study their own Diseases.  
Your State, though real Christians, is certainly  
a distemper'd One. If you know any thing by  
your selves, you must find remaining Degrees  
of Darkness upon your Minds, Enmity and Dis-  
affection upon your Wills, Impurity, Excesses,  
and Defects in your Passions: Endeavour there-  
fore to know what Faculties are most out of  
Order, what Graces you most Want, what Du-  
ties you are most unready and unapt for: Be  
affected with the true State of your Case;  
know it in Order to your Humiliation; that  
you may be sensible how much you want a Sa-  
viour, and may be more serious and frequent  
in your Applications to him. There is nothing  
of greater Importance than this.

*Refled.* 2. When you know your own State  
and how much you want a Saviour, then look  
to the fulness and sufficiency of the Redeemer,  
and see how gloriously qualified He is for all  
the Purposes of your Salvation. Read his se-  
veral Characters as they are laid before you in  
the sacred Books, and there you will see the  
Import of them; namely, that He is every way  
qualified to heal and save distemper'd Souls.  
He is a **SUN** to enlighten, to cheer, to comfort,  
and revive his People: And He is a Sun of

**RIGHT-**

SERM. RIGHTEOUSNESS TOO: He has Righteousness in  
 XIII. himself, and He can communicate and make  
 this over to his People for every saving  
 Purpose: He is the *Lord our Strength*; and is  
*made of God unto us for Wisdom, Righteousness,*  
*Sanctification, and Redemption*: There is not one  
 distressing Difficulty which the Sinner labours  
 under, but *the Sun of Righteousness* has an Ex-  
 cellency answering thereunto: There is not a  
 Disease or Malady, but what He can heal and  
 remove.

*Reflect.* 3. Let us admire the Love of God in  
 providing such a Saviour for our Relief. We  
 had rebelled against him, and had undone our  
 selves by our Rebellion: We had provoked his  
 Wrath, and brought our selves under his Curse:  
 Every Disease that lies upon us was of our own  
 procuring: We deserved no Pity, no Help,  
 so *unworthy* were we: And so *wicked* that we  
 sought it not: It was of his own meer good  
 Will and Grace that there was a Thought about  
 us, or our *Deliverance*: And a wonderful Favour  
 we ought to esteem it, that He was any way  
 concerned for us. But that He shou'd appoint  
 his own Son to this Office; to act the Part of  
 a Saviour, and stand in the Place of Sinners,  
 and to this End *prepare a Body* for Him: *What*  
*manner of Love is this that the Father hath be-*  
*stowed upon us! What shall we say to these Things?*  
 Verily, we ought to cry out in the Language  
 of the Apostle; O, *the Height and Depth, the*  
*Length and Breadth of the Love of God which*  
*passeth*



passeth Knowledge! Let it be our frequent **SERM.**  
Work to admire and contemplate this Grace: **XIII.**

The more we do so, the more of Heaven will come down into our Souls; the better Effect it will have upon us, to heal our Maladies; and the better we shall be prepared for Heaven itself, which is all Admiration and Praise for this abounding Grace.

*Reflect.* 4. Will the Sun of Righteousness arise with Healing in his Wings to all that fear Him? then there is Hope for every Saint under all his Discouragements. Whatever Disease thy Soul is Sick of; though thou hast been long bowed down with a Spirit of Infirmary, yet thy Cure may be effected: Men or Angels, its true, have not Power to help thee; but the Sun of Righteousness can: Thy Case has no Difficulty in it to Him, nor will it be dangerous to thyself, if He take it in Hand: He is mighty to save, or able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever lives to make Intercession: Let not the distemper'd Soul despond then, as if there was no Relief, but look to this Almighty Saviour.

*Reflect.* 5. Let all of us arise and go to Him: What Motive do you Want to excite and persuade you to it, besides what you have heard? He can, He will heal you: Never did any Soul miscarry or perish under his Care: He never did refuse One that offered it self to Him, nor say to a Sinner, "Thy Case is incurable, and there is no Relief:" He heals and succours  
freely

SERM. freely without Money and without Price: He is

XIII. not hard to be sought unto, though He is invisible: Thou mayst in every Place apply to Him: He is near at Hand, and will look with Compassion upon thee: Go to Him then, and say, "*Lord save me, or else I perish*: None can be of any Service to me, besides thy self: I have undone my self but my Help is in thee: Of all other Things, I must say, they are miserable Comforters, Physicians of no Value, but thou canst make me every whit whole: O, heal my Diseases and make me sound again." But when you go to him it will be necessary to take the following Hints;

1<sup>st</sup>. You must trust your selves entirely in his Hands; to his Skill and Care and Faithfulness. Come to him, and commit your selves without Reserve or Suspicion to his Conduct. Lay aside all hard, unworthy Thoughts of Him; and come with entire Dependance and Confidence, desirous that He wou'd make Use of his Skill and Power to heal and save you, and then be assured, you cannot but succeed well: *Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean*, (said the Leper, Mat. viii. 2.) And we shou'd come with encouraging Expectations, that He will do what He is able to do for us.

2<sup>dly</sup>. You must be heartily sorry that you have put so many Slights upon Him heretofore. How often have you heard of the glorious Character of a Saviour, but have set no Value upon him, nay have made light of Him?

You

*Christ the Sun of Righteousness, &c.*

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SERM.  
XII.

You have acted as if this glorious *Sun of Righteousness* could be of no real service to you. Now, it is but reasonable that you should be affected with your ill Conduct: You would not hear his Call, and by this Means you have encreased your own Distemper, and it has prevailed more entirely over you: The Wounds of your Souls have gone on neglected, because you would not accept of the offered Help of the Lord and Saviour: And could any Thing be more foolish and unreasonable in *it self*, more ungrateful to *Him*, or more injurious to *your own Souls*; Since, after all, you must be recover'd by this very despised Saviour, if ever you are so? Be ashamed, and blush to think, what a Temper and Spirit you have been of: Beg that He would give you a *broken Heart*, and then that He would *bind it up*: That He would not refuse *you*, because you have so wickedly refused *Him*.

3dly. Beg his Compassion and Assistance. say,  
“ Lord pity us, help us; we have nothing else  
“ to which we can address our selves but thy  
“ Compassion.” When the poor Woman came to him with a Request to have her Daughter healed, she at first met with a discouraging Answer; *'tis not meet to take the Childrens Bread, and cast it to the Dogs*: She readily owns;  
“ Lord, I am as vile as a Dog; but yet let  
“ me have a Dog's Portion, *the Crumbs under*  
“ *the Table*: If I may not have *Childrens Bread*,  
“ let me have a Crumb of Mercy from thee:”  
And



**SERM.** And the success you know was very remarkable, Mat. xv. 21, &c. *Jesus answered and said unto her, O Woman, great is thy Faith: Be it unto thee even as thou wilt.*

**XIII.**

4thly. Apply your selves only to him. Remember He will stand alone in the whole Business of working out our eternal Salvation: *He trode the Wine press of his Fathers Wrath alone, and of the People there was none with Him,* Isa. lxiii. 3. He will have no Associate in the Glory of redeeming Work, no Partner in his Office: It was assigned him by the Father, and He alone was able and willing to undertake it: To join others with him, wou'd be to charge him with Insufficiency: He expects, that as He has done the whole Part of a *purchasing* Saviour, so the Work of *applying* the Fruits of his Purchase shou'd be entirely under his own Management. The Honour of it is all his own.

5thly. Keep close to the Rules that He prescribes. It is what every common Physician among Men expects: The Way of healing must not be the Way of your *own* chusing but of *his*. CHRIST only is fit to prescribe: He knows your Case, the Method of your Cure, the Cause of your Distemper, and every step that is to be taken in the whole Affair. His Wisdom, Power, and Grace alone can effect the Cure; and you can never hope to be healed any other Way.

(6.) Let those who have been healed, know what Returns are to be made. And they are such as these,

1<sup>st</sup>. Ascribe

1<sup>st</sup>. Ascribe the whole Cure to him, and thank him for it. He is the sole Author, and therefore He alone shou'd have the Glory of it. The Crown shou'd be set upon *his* Head, and to *Him* shou'd our Offerings of Praise be made. O, let us o ten stir up our selves to the Work of Love and Praise: Who is obliged to it, if not the Person *healed*? Or, who can deserve it if the *Healer* does not?

2<sup>dly</sup>. Lay out the Health and Strength He has given you wholly in his Service. If thou art made whole, arise and walk with thy Lord: Tread in his Steps, and follow *him* as thy Leader and Pattern. What thou hast is the Effect of *his Grace*, not of *thy Merit*: He gives thee Ability, and wilt thou not use it for him? O, reckon it not your own, but devote it to Him: It is Sacrilege to alienate it to any other Purposes than those of his Honour. say, "Blessed Saviour, *I am thy Servant*; truly *I am thy Servant*: I will henceforth come at thy Call, and act in no other Way, and for no other End than thou directest." Let thy Heart, thy Conscience be all his: Let every Duty, both to God and Man, be closely attended: Be more humble, watchful, diligent, pure, upright, spiritual, and heavenly-minded: Let thy Closet, thy Family, the Church, and all thy Conversation be so many different Scenes of Business and Action for him who has healed thee.

3<sup>dly</sup>. Take

SERM.

3dly. Take Heed of Relapses. If thou art

XIII.

cured, remember the *Item* our Lord gave the Man whom He had healed, and reckon it spoke to thy self; *Behold, thou art now made whole; Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee,* John v. 14. This wou'd be a new Aggravation of thy Sin, and a great Provocation of thy Lord. When God *speaks Peace to his People, and to his Saints* He says, *let them not return again to Folly*, Psal. lxxxv. 8. Thus the Spirit will be more grieved, and the Heart more hardened; Conscience will be stupified, Sin will revive and get Strength again, Hell will triumph, and all the Enemies of thy Soul be pleased.

4thly. Live in a sole Dependance upon Him who has *so far* healed thee, and beg that He wou'd *perfect* thy Cure. That spiritual Life, Health, and Vigour which thou hast received must be upheld from on high. Lean upon thy Lord, and confide in him: Acknowledge thy Obligations to him, and Dependance upon Him; Look unto him for constant and daily Supplies; Remember thou art a Member of Christs Body, and that Supplies must be derived by constant Communications from the Head and Source of Life: Earnestly apply unto *him* therefore, and beg that He wou'd not leave thee, but improve the Cure till thy Soul is perfectly healed; till Sin is quite done away; till thou art brought into a full Conformity to the Will of God; till all thy Faculties are set right, and every



every Grace is wrought up to Perfection; till SERM.  
thou art ready to enter into the Presence of XIII.  
God, and triumph and rejoice before him in  
compleat Salvation.

*Here this Sermon may be Divided.*

I come now to THE THRID THING  
PROMISED in the Words: Namely, these  
Persons, (such as *fear the Name of God or Christ*),  
*shall go forth, and grow up as Calves of the Stall.*  
I shall here consider

[1.] What Growth in Grace is, or the  
Growth that is here promised to them that fear  
God.

[2.] I shall shew whence it is that they  
shall grow; and then make some particular  
Improvement.

[1.] What is Growth in Grace, or the  
Growth here spoken of? There may be Growth  
in several Respects, as

(1.) When Grace spreads it self wider in the  
Soul: That is, when each Faculty becomes more  
spiritual and refined: When Grace penetrates  
further into it: When the whole Mind is more  
Subject to the Gospel of Christ, and under the  
Influence thereof: When divine Light is  
brighter in the Understanding, and the Will  
is become more loving and obedient to God:  
When the Soul is more powerfully drawn by  
the great Motives and Encouragements of the  
Gospel: When it is more affected with the

SERM. plays of the Authority of God, and the Grace  
XIII. of the Saviour, and more powerfully bowed

to the Redeemers Demands: When divine things take faster Hold of the Soul, and command it more: When the Mind is become seasoned with the great Principles of the Gospel: When it is moulded into the very *Image of God*, and framed by it as the Wax is framed by the Seal. A Man may be said to grow, in Proportion as the holy Change passes farther upon Him, or is greater in the Degrees of it upon the several Powers of his Soul: In this Sense the Apostle prays for the Thessalonians: *The very God of Peace sanctify you wholly: And I pray God, your whole Spirit, and Soul, and Body, be preserved blameless unto the Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ,* 1 Theff. v. 23.

(2.) We may be said to grow in Grace, when we grow in the several Kinds of Grace. The Beginning of the divine Life in the Soul, is like the kindling of a Spark of Fire which grows up into a fervent Flame: And when there is an Encrease of one and another, or of every Kind of Grace, then the Soul may be said to grow: When it has not only common, but *special* Grace: When there is not only Light and Knowledge, but *Faith* also; nor yet Faith only, but a *holy Life*: And when there is added to this a flaming *Love*: When the Soul is melted into *Godly Sorrow*: When it is led to exercise it self in *Mortification and Self-Denial*, and to *Cleanse* it self from all *Filthiness both of Flesh and*

*and Spirit: And when it rises from Holiness to Comfort and Joy in believing.*

SERM.

XIII.

(3.) The Soul grows when it becomes more strong and powerful in any particular Grace. The more we grow in Grace, the more will the Force and Efficacy of it be felt, and the Actings of it will be more successful in reaching their End; either in mortifying Sin, or in furnishing us for Duty. We grow in Knowledge and Light, when the great Mysteries of the Gospel shine more visibly in the Life, and become more fruitful in forming us to Faith, and Love, and Meekness, and Holiness of Conversation: The more we *purify our Souls in obeying the Truth through the Spirit*, the more we grow in Grace. So, when our Affections become answerable to the steadiness and vigour of our Faith: When *great Difficulties* don't lead us to Distrust and Anxiety, as *little* ones did before; but we can trust God in the greatest that befall us. *They* grow who once struggled with Passion and Appetite, and were easily carried away by them, but can now overcome them; whose good Desires rise into holy vigorous Endeavours; whose good Thoughts ripen into holy Words and Actions; whose Knowledge is more clear and certain, more powerful and experimental; whose Love is more Fervent, Steady and Pure; and whose Repentance flows not only from a Sense of Wrath and Fear of Hell; but from a Love of God, and hatred of Sin.



SERM. (4.) When the Exercise of Grace becomes  
XIII. more easy and pleasant to us than it was before.

~~~~~ When the several Graces of the Spirit are ready to be called out to Exercise, and move like oiled Wheels upon the first Attempt to set them a going. *That* Soul is in a growing State that is ready to attend Duty upon short Warning, and with every proper Grace engaged; that can pray and read in a spiritual Frame, deny it self, act Faith in the Promises, renounce the World and Flesh, forgive Injuries, and do Acts of Charity with Readiness and Pleasure. Some Persons find their Minds lie a great Way off, and averse from spiritual and holy Exercise: They must argue with themselves a great while before they can prevail: In many Cases the Christian has much hard Work of this sort: He must chide and reproach himself again and again, before his backward Spirit will comply. Now, on the other Hand, when spiritual Work is easily got into, there is undoubtedly Improvement and Growth in Grace. There *may* be Growth indeed where there is some Difficulty in getting the Heart into a spiritual Frame; but then that Grace cannot be so remarkable or great: Though the *Essence* of it cannot be denied upon this score, yet the *Strength and Vigour* of it must: This is a plain Argument that Grace is weak, though it may be true. Moreover, when the Exercise of Grace gives the Soul great Pleasure and Delight,

light, and makes it reach forward to greater Perfection; *this* is a Sign it is growing. SERM.
XIII.

(5.) We may be said to grow in Grace, when We are more steady, constant, and regular in the Exercise of it. A Person that is very far out of Order may stir now and then; but his Motions are short and transient. It is the healthful, vigorous Body that moves regularly and steadily for some Time together, and can bear long and frequent Motion. So it is with the Soul that is growing in Grace, especially if it has made any considerable Progress in it: By such Exercises as these the Habits of Grace are confirmed; and it argues the Soul in an improving State when it is fixed, frequent, and regular therein.

(6.) The Soul is growing when the Fruits of Grace appear eminently upon it. The Tree that bears good Fruit certainly grows: *God is able, says the Apostle, to make all Grace abound towards you; that ye always having Sufficiency in all Things, may abound to every good Work: 2 Cor. ix. 8.* When Christians are called out to any special Duty or Service, they shew they had their Hearts fitted for that Service by a Readiness to engage in it, and a skilful Performance of it to the Glory of God: This is a glorious Sufficiency.

When an earthly Mind becomes Heavenly, and a vain Mind becomes Serious; when a narrow Spirit becomes generous, and one that was slothful and unactive in the Service of

SERM.

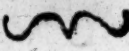
XIII.

God, becomes one of excellent Usefulness, full of good Works, and brings forth much Fruit. This is Growth in Grace: In any or all these Instances there may be Growth.

I come now to enquire,

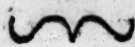
[2.] Whence it is, that they who fear Gods Name *shall* grow in Grace.

(1.) Grace is apt in it's own Nature to grow. Therefore it is represented by our Lord as *Leaven*, which a Woman took and hid in three Measures of Meal, till the whole was leavened, Mat. xiii. 33. And in the foregoing Verses it is compared to a *Grain of Mustard-Seed*, which is exceeding small, but under the Influence of the Heavens grows up to a great Tree, so that the Fowls of the Air lodge in the Branches thereof. God speaks a Word sometimes by his Ministers, or by a Christian Friend, or sometimes He gives a Lash with his Rod: This Works upon the Sinners Mind and Conscience; he sees his miserable Condition, and mourns for Sin; then He hates it, and resolves against it, and seeks the Death of it: God displays before the Sinners Eyes the Beauty of the Saviour, and the Riches of divine Grace, and gives him some Glimmerings of Hope; then Hope encourages him to pray, and Prayer encreases his Hope, and hence arises Experience of divine Breathings and Goodness; and this gives him more Hope and encreases his Diligence: Hence springs up Faith and Holy Confidence, and that leads to Assurance: Thus from

from one Step to another Grace thrives, tho' SERM.
it does not grow so much in some as in others; XIII.
and it may grow sometimes where its Growth 
is not discerned.

(2.) The Ordinances of the Gospel are designed for this very End. Ministers are Gods Husband-men both to *plant* the divine Seed and also to *Water* it, that it may grow and prosper. Whilst attending in the House of God upon his Word, the Rays of divine Instruction are scattered, and the Spirit shines in upon the Minds of those who are in Darkness, and enables them to see more of the glorious Majesty of the Father, and of the Beauty and Loveliness of the Son. Here the Gales of the Spirits Influence come, and blow up the Spark of holy Love in the Soul into a Flame. Here he kindles holy Desires, and then he answers them with the rich Communications of his Grace. The Rays of divine Light in the Soul warm and quicken it's Appetite to sacred Truths. Here the Promises of the true and faithful God are laid before the Soul for its Faith to feed upon. Here it is allowed to pour out its Desires to *a God that beareth Prayer*, that so its Desires may become warmer and stronger. Here the Table of the Lord is spread, and divine Repasts are given, wherein the Soul holds Converse with God, covenants with him, and engages to him that it will be his; and God also engages to the Soul to do it good, and save it for ever.

SERM. (3.) The Spirit of God is given to cultivate
XIII. and raise the divine Principle in them that

 fear Him. The gracious Influences and Operations of the *Holy Ghost* prevailing against Sin in the Soul, and determining it for God, are the Principle that is to grow: And as it is by him that we *at first* fear God, and are made holy; so it is by him that we are made to *improve* in Grace and Holiness: He sets home divine Truths upon the Soul, and makes them Strength and Life to it: He sets home the Promises and Threatenings of the Word, and makes the Soul to tremble and weep, to hope love and rejoice: He leads the Soul into Secret, and there teaches it to mourn and cry, and endeavour to get the Grace that has been recommended: He leads it also to holy Resolutions, and enables it to feed upon that Word, and practise the Duty that has been inculcated: He sanctifies and quickens Souls, and enables them to pour out their Hearts before him in Faith and Love and holy Breathings.

(4.) God has promised that *the Sun of Righteousness* shall arise unto them for this End that they may grow. Grace of it self wou'd die away, were it not for divine Influences: These are secured by Gods Promise to them that fear his Name: God has engaged himself to them, and *faithful is He that hath promised, who also will do it*: He who has begun will not leave the Work imperfect: Without this Influence the Saints wou'd soon become like
the

the Seed upon the stony Ground; they wou'd soon miscarry and come to Nothing for Want of Moisture: But God who hath *raised*, will not fail the Expectations of his People. SERM. XIII.

I come now to make some Application of what has been said from this Head; And this shews,

(1.) What great Cause there is of Joy to them that *fear Gods Name*. *You shall go forth, and grow up as Calves of the Stall*: Your Growth shall be beautiful, ornamental, and useful; not like the Growth of the Weed, (which, the more it grows, is the more hurtful :) But *you shall grow up as Calves of the Stall*. Though your Graces are weak and feeble Things, they shall be taken Care of. Though they are now under a Cloud and declining, they shall not be always so: *The Sun of Righteousness* shall arise unto you, and then will they revive and flourish again: You don't now *perceive* that Grace grows; but, sooner or later, *you shall* to your great Comfort and Joy.

Now, what a Blessing is this to have Grace grow, and to be *sure* it shall grow? Grace is the Ornament of the Soul, the Credit and Honour of the Church: To grow in Grace, is to draw nearer to God and Heaven: Hereby you have the most comfortable Evidence of the Truth of Grace, that it is a *living Principle* within you: If it grow you have great Cause of Joy in God: If He has made you *fear his Name*, He will make you *grow in Grace*: And
if

SERM. if you grow, it *shall* be towards Perfection, of
 XIII. a State of perfect Happiness. Growing rich,
 ~~~~~ honourable, and healthful, is *nothing* towards  
 growing gracious, holy, and heavenly-minded.

(2.) What Cause is there for each of us to examine, whether we are growing or not. Have we this good thing, the Fear of God, in us? And are we interested in the divine Favour? This is an Enquiry of vast Importance to every one of us: It is indeed to ask whether we be living Plants, or dead and rotten flakes, fit only for the Fire: Let us *make diligent search* here: If there be Occasion for it in *any Case*, there must be in the *Present*: The Matter depending is of everlasting Consequence, and it's what you cannot be indifferent in, without acting a very unreasonable and hazardous Part: Seriously apply your Thoughts to this Matter: Let each of us retire and ask our selves seriously; *am I growing in Grace, or not?* Such Employment in secret wou'd discover Hypocrites to themselves, and make them uneasy with their own Estate: It wou'd awaken in us a holy Fear, discover our Danger, and bring it in View. If we wou'd know whether We are growing, we shou'd look back into the foregoing Particulars, and ask our selves; " Does Grace enter farther into my Soul, refine and spiritualize it? " Have I more Light, more Faith, more Love, " more Humility, better Dispositions for the " Service of God and Self-denial? Am I more  
 " thank-

“ thankful, more watchful more careful and diligent in every Duty? Does my Growth extend to the several Kinds of Grace? Is Grace more Strong and Powerful? Are the Exercises of it easy, regular, and constant? And do I find the Fruits of it more eminently appearing both in Heart and Life?”

But besides this, I wou'd suggest another Hint or two;

1<sup>st</sup>. Do you grow in a Love and Value for the Blessed Jesus? This will be an excellent symptom of Growth. Let *Him* know, (saith one) that he has made a great Proficiency in Grace, who is highly pleased with the *Lord Jesus Christ*. St. Paul was got to a noble height, when He *counted all things but Loss and Dung, for the Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord*, Philip. iii. 8. And elsewhere (says the same Apostle) *whom having not seen, ye love* (1 Pet. i. 8.) We are very apt to think *this Earth*, on which we dwell, a vast Mass of Matter; whilst we imagine the *Sun and Stars* to be little things: And so its very common for a carnal ignorant Soul to reckon his own Graces and Duties exceeding great and valuable, and to think He has enough of these to recommend him: But this is a certain Argument of great Ignorance of *Jesus Christ*. We are prone to think that all we do is very great and considerable, and the Reason is, because we don't know what Righteousness we want,  
(like

SERM. (like the Person on Earth, I say, who reckons  
 XIII. the Bulk of it exceeding great, because He  
 knows nothing of the Sun and other Heavenly Bodies.)

He who has been most Sollicitous for Grace, and taken most Pains in Duty, (if he knows what he has been doing,) will have the highest Value for Christ: He sees so much Imperfection in every Grace, so many Defects in every Service he performs, that he will acknowledge he *must* perish, if he be not justified by the Righteousness of another.

2dly. Enquire whether you grow in humble and mean Thoughts of your selves. To these God has made the Promise, that He will give *more Grace: He resisteth the Proud, but giveth Grace unto the Humble*, Jam. iv. 6. Humbling our selves is the Way to be *exalted*, both in Grace, and in the divine Favour, 1 Pet. v. 6. Low Thoughts of our selves is no sign of our being low in Grace, but of the contrary. The Tree that shoots its Roots farthest downward, riseth highest upward with its Branches, and stands the fastest with all its Height. They who have stood first in the Rank of God's Worthies, have commonly had the least and lowest Thoughts of themselves: *I count not my self to have apprehended*, was the Language of that eminent Apostle, St. Paul, Philip. iii. 13. and in the foregoing Verse, *Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect*:

Nay



Nay in other Places He confesses, that He was *less than the least of all Saints, and the chief of Sinners*. (Eph. iii. 8. 1 Tim. i. 15.) We find elsewhere the good Man *Jacob* saying, *I am not worthy of the least of all the Mercies, and of all the Truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy Servant*, Gen. xxxii. 10. And the Psalmist owns, *So foolish was I and ignorant: I was as a Beast before Thee*, Psal. lxxiii. 22. Humility gives rising to Grace: There's an Aptness in it to make the Soul grow, because it leads it to God in Christ under a Sense of its own Weakness, and makes it warm and earnest at the Throne of Grace for Relief.

3dly. Do your Desires after Growth encrease? Our Perfection on Earth lies in *Desire*; I mean, in labourious endeavouring Desire, not in slothful lazy Wishes. When our Duties are defective, God measures them by our Desires rather than by what they are, if at the same Time Perfection in them be what we are wishing and striving to attain, and endeavouring to come as near to as may be. Where there is a *willing Mind, it is accepted according to that a Man hath, and not according to that he hath not*, 2 Cor. viii. 12. Desires indeed are what the good Man talks of more than any thing else; but lest you flatter your selves into any dangerous Mistake here, observe whether your Desires be active, and put you upon the greatest Diligence and Labour in the Way that God

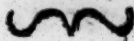
has

SERM. has prescribed. It is a remarkable, and an affecting Expression of a great Man; "Hell is paved with lazy Wishes, and full of them." And indeed the Wise Man says something to the same Purpose; *The Desire of the slothful killeth Him*; "His Desires must needs be a perpetual Torment to him, because He will not be at the Pains to give them Satisfaction;" *Prov. xxi. 15.*

4thly. Are you more diligent in your Endeavours after Growth? *The diligent Hand maketh rich.* With the Blessing of God ordinarily it is so, both in Temporals and Spirituals. *The Soul of the Sluggard desireth, and hath nothing,* *Prov. xiii. 4. His Hand refuseth to labour:* He desires; but He won't be at the Pains to accomplish his Desire. There is no Growth to be expected without Pains, though (whilst we labour,) we must own the Success of all depends upon the divine Blessing. We must be careful not to untie the Knot which God hath tied, and make Promises and Precepts disagree. *Endeavours,* (Faith and Obedience,) belong to us by God's Appointment, and *Success* belongs to Him: As we cannot with all our Endeavours secure success without God, so we have no Reason to expect that He will give us this Success whilst we neglect what is to be done on our Part. And this Diligence must be applied two ways,

[1.] In using the Means which God has appointed for our Growth: And

SERM,  
XIII.



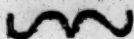
[2.] Against those things that are the Hindrances of it.

[1.] In the first Place you are to be diligent in using the Means which God has appointed for your Growth. As

(1.) Earnestly implore the Spirits Assistance. JESUS hath purchased the Spirit: He and his Father have sent him down, as a divine Agent, for maintaining the Cause of the Redeemer on Earth; and to this End his Influences are to be sought; for if He breathe not, the Souls of Men must all lie, like a Ship, quite becalmed; or like the *Egyptians* in their Darknes when none stirred from his Place. Beg his Presence with you, that He wou'd both remove that from your Mind that wou'd indispose you to profit and grow; and that He wou'd suggest those Thoughts, and stir up those Affections, and give those Influences which are necessary to your Improvement in every holy Disposition. Beg his Presence with you in all your Prayers; when ever you take the Bible in your Hands; when ever you go to the religious Assemblies; when you meditate in Secret; when you go to the Table of the Lord; when Mercies flow in upon you, or when you smart under the Rod: This will give Life to every Provi-



SERM. Providence, and to every Ordinance; and this  
 XIII. will be a Means of your spiritual Growth.



(2.) Attend carefully upon all the Appointments of God. Thus you may expect to *increase with all the Increase of God*. Converse with the Saints; for as in *Water, Face answereth to Face so the Heart of Man to Man*: And as *Iron sharpeneth Iron, so a Man the Countenance of his Friend*, Prov. xxvii. 17, 19. Let slip no Opportunities of a religious Nature: You know not what you may lose by it. Often retire for solemn Meditation: This is the Way to set Things home upon the Conscience: This is indeed Dealing with your own Hearts, and *applying* things to them. Wait upon God also in his publick Ordinances with the greatest Seriousness and Solemnity, to renew your Vows, and and confirm your Resolutions; to profess your selves *his*, and derive Grace from him, to be more steady and upright in his Service for the future; and there offer up your hearty Thanks also for his wonderful Condescension to become your God in Covenant.

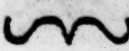
(3.) If you wou'd grow, you must go deep in the Exercises of Mortification and Self-denial for Christ's Sake. The *stony Ground*, where the Seed of the Word enter'd but a little Way, soon lost all that it seemed to have. A Soul that is much employ'd to find out, and subdue the Lusts of his own Heart; that is busy in tearing up the Roots of Sin, and desires the utter Ruin of his Lusts, and will not give over  
 because

because of some Opposition or unsuccessful Attempts; such a Soul, I say, is in a likely way of Improvement. The Exercises of Mortification are like pulling up the Weeds, and thereby giving the Corn room to grow that wou'd else be oppress'd and born down. He that wou'd grow must not only deal in outward Purification; but He must carry the Work to his Heart, strike at *the Root* of Sin, at the *corrupted Nature* which is the Source of all Pollution; and then He may hope to grow and flourish in Grace. But then,

[2.] You must also guard against those things that wou'd hinder your Growth: And they are such as these,

(1.) Worldly Cares. These greatly hinder the Souls Growth: You know what our Lord says in the Parable; that the *Thorns sprung up, and choaked the Word*: And what a dreadful Effect had earthly things upon them that were *invited to the Gospel-Supper*? They all began to make some Excuse, and they had each of them a *Worldly* one. Give me Leave to observe, (what was the saying of an excellent Man.) that Hell is full of *good* Husbands, as well as *ill* Ones: When God came with dreadful Destruction upon the old World, we find they were not only *eating, and drinking, and giving in Marriage*; but *building, and planting, and using all Manner of good Husbandry*. If the World do indeed get between Christ and your  
D d Hearts,

SERM. Hearts, you are certainly lost to all Spiritual

XIII. Improvement and Growth. Some of those,  whom the *Apostle* mentions *even weeping*, were such as *mined earthly Things*, Philip. iii. 18. And when our Lord is cautioning against *Surfeiting and Drunkenness*, He adds, *and the Cares of this Life*; intimating that these are equally pernicious with the other; *Luke xxi. 34.*

(2.) Carefully guard against Pride and Self-sufficiency. This brings a Blast upon all that is good: We are expressly told that God *resisteth the Proud*, 1 Pet. v. 5. It is not only a Disease where it reigns, but it is Death to the Soul: It breeds a great many other Lusts which destroy all that's good: He that thinks himself to have *already attained*, seeks nothing further.

(3.) Evil Society is another great Hindrance. Our Companions have a strange Influence upon us, to bring us over to their Temper and Way; and this shou'd make us very careful whom we choose as our Familiars: The Psalmist had such a Sense of this upon his Mind, that He cou'd say with a pious Resolution and Courage, *Depart from me, ye evil Doers; for I will keep the Commandments of my God*, Psalm. cxix. 115. How many serious Minds have found themselves dreadfully set back in the Ways of God by evil Society?

(4.) Another Hindrance is when any Lust is allowed of and indulged. If the Professor of Religion has Idols in his Heart, all his Enquiries



quiries after God will profit him nothing. *This People*, (says the Prophet by the Commission of his God,) *come before Thee as thy People; they sit and hear as my People; but their Heart goeth after their Covetousness, or is withdrawn from me, Ezek. xxxiii. 31.* And the Psalmist lays it down as a Maxim, *If I regard Iniquity in my Heart, the Lord will not hear me, Psal. lxvi. 18.* There is nothing will more effectually defeat the success of all Means of Improvement, than an indulged, allowed Lust of what sort soever it is.

(5.) The frequent Neglect of any Duty will greatly hinder our Growth. And therefore when the Apostle is giving Instruction concerning several Duties; He still recommends Constancy in all: *Rejoice evermore: Pray without ceasing: In every thing give Thanks, 1 Thes. v. 16, 17, 18.* When a Candle, (says a serious and grave Divine,) is newly blown out, it's easy to blow it in again; but if it be quite gone, nothing will be of any Service to recover the Flame again. Our Hearts are naturally growing cold, while we are withdrawn from the immediate service of Religion; and there is scarce a serious Mind, but what finds it self, one Time or other grieved this Way, and is pleased with the Return of Religious Opportunities: But when these Seasons are frequently, or long neglected, (as long Fasting is injurious to the Body,) a spiritual Decay will

SERM.  
XIII.

SERM. be very visible, and the Life and Health of  
XIII. the Soul will be hardly recovered.

~~~~~ I have but one Word more, and that is by  
Way of Exhortation.

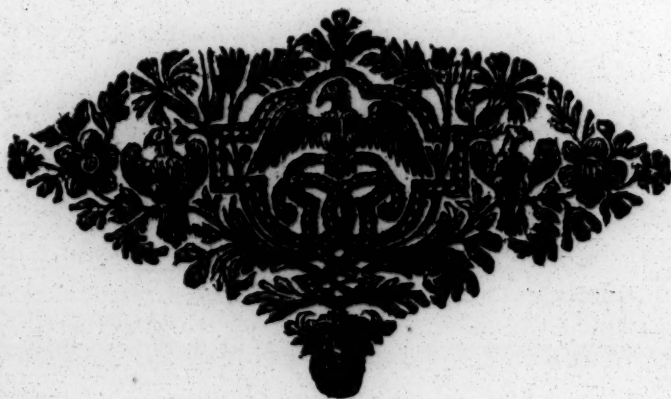
1st. Consider there is *Room for Growth*. You *have not yet attained, neither are already perfect*. May you not increase in the Knowledge of God, and of *Jesus Christ*, and the great Mysteries of the Gospel? May you not especially improve in Faith? Is not this too weak and wavering? Are there not visible Defects in your holy Love and Zeal? Is there no Room for your Improvement in Spiritual-mindedness, Mortification, Self-denial, and holy Watchfulness? Yes verily. Nay let me add,

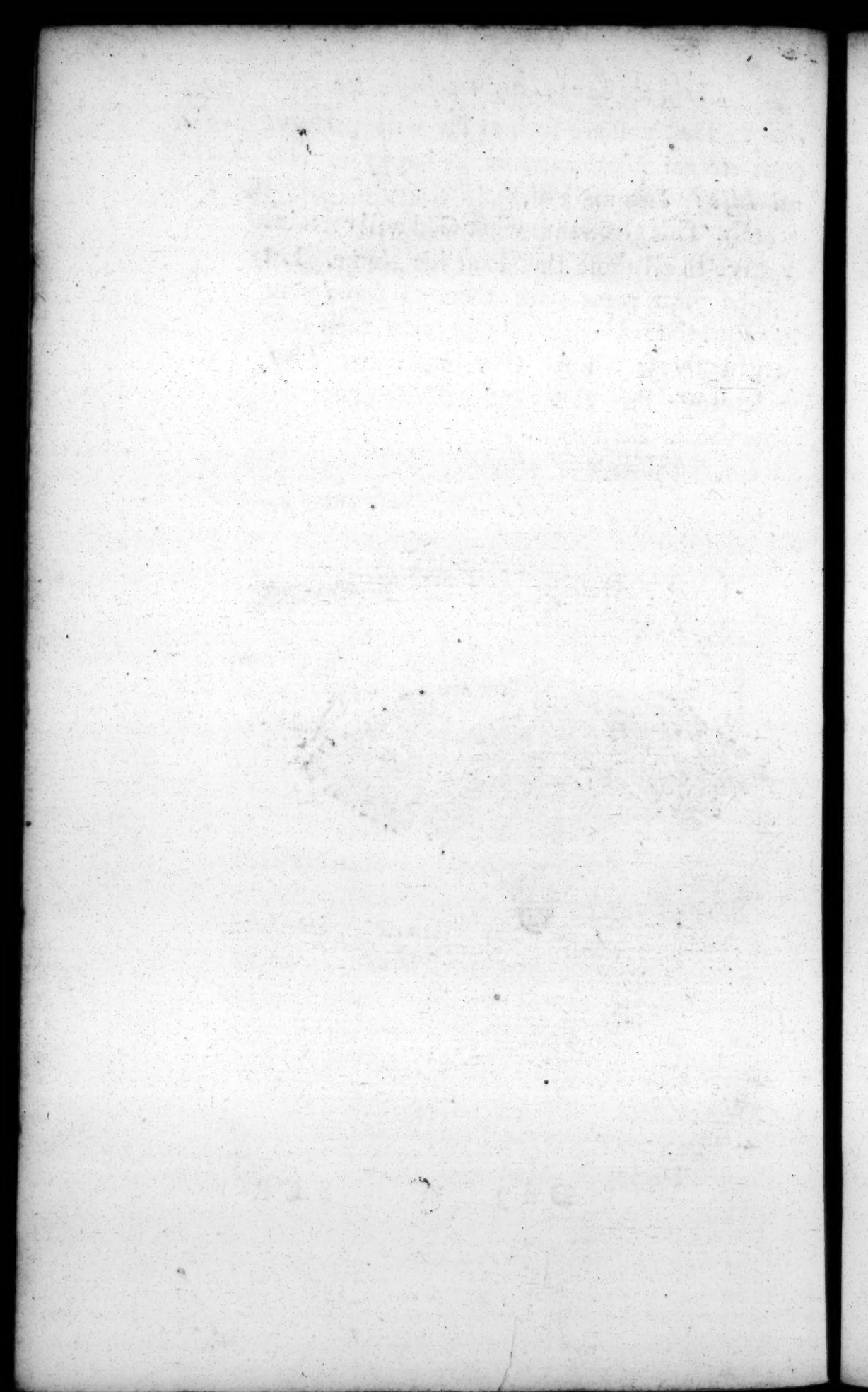
2^{dly}. There's great *Need of it too*. There's Need of it to prevent the Success of Satans Attempts upon you; that Ordinances may be more advantageous to you; that you may have more Comfort in your own Walk with God, a more lively Sense of his Favour, and be able to do him more Honour and Service in the World.

3^{dly}. Your Growth will *evidence your spiritual Life*. If you *grow, you live*: The least Twig that shoots forth and extends it self, is a *living One*; while the largest Stock, or Tree, that grows not is *dead and sapless*; it has no Life nor Virtue in it. And wou'd you not have *some Evidence*, that you are *indeed alive*, united to Jesus Christ as your *living Head*, and have his Spirit dwelling in you as a *vital Principle*?

riple? That you are such as He will preserve from *eternal Death*, and make happy in *eternal Life*? Let me add, SERM. XIII.

4thly. This Growth is what God will certainly give to all those that Fear his Name. Let this be your great Care then, to have your Souls principled with: Grace; and then conscientiously wait upon God in his own Way, to improve this Life, and raise it up to full Growth and Perfection.







SERMON XIV.

ELISHA's Cry after ELIJAH'S God.

2 KINGS II. 14.

— *Where is the Lord God of Elijah?* —

THE Beauty and Order of the *natural* SERM.
World, is the Work and Care, of the XIV.
God of Nature; his Presence and Agency with it are necessary to prevent it's falling into Confusion and Ruin: The *Church* and it's Interest can no more subsist and flourish without his Influence, as the *God of Grace*; and every Individual in that holy Society feels it self thrive, or decay, in Proportion to the Communications it is favour'd with from above. Gracious Souls can triumph in a *present* God, but they faint and die when he *withdraws*. There is nothing therefore they dread so much as his Departure.

The Principle of Self-preservation is twisted into the Constitution and Make of the new
 D d 4 Creature

SERM. Creature as well as others: They who have

XIV. seen the Power and the Grace of God display'd, and the tottering Interest of Religion upheld by the Ministration of his Servants, must be allow'd to have a deep Concern, when they see the Providence of God calling *such Persons* from their Posts of Usefulness, whom he favour'd with much of his Presence, and made greatly serviceable: They who are left behind have so much less Interest in Heaven than they had; and there are fewer Talents to be employ'd, in the Preservation, and spreading of vital Godliness. Hereupon they can't but be jealous lest the God who formed *them* most excellently, and did such great Things for his Church by *their* Means shou'd withdraw too; than which, there can't be a more painful and distressing Thought.

This alarm'd the good Man in the Text, and pierced him to the Heart, and what stupidity must it be in us to look on unmov'd, while the best Props of Religion are taken away from us? How many, how wide are our Breaches? Nor are our Wounds healed to this Day.

And what bodes worse, is the languishing and tottering State of Things among us, a general Declension of *Personal and Family Religion*.

While some fall by the stroke of Death, and others by the Temptations of the World, and the few who remain seem cold and spiritless in their Masters Work, may not we justly fear that

that God is provok'd to depart from us? Shall not we ask, *Where is the Lord God of Elijah?* SERM. XIV.

Where is *He* whom our Fathers loved and served? *He* who blest and honoured them, and by whom He did such great things for the Maintenance of his Cause and Interest?

In this Chapter we have that most surprising Story of the *Translation* of Gods Prophet *Elijah* into Heaven: *He* only and *Enoch* were thus privileged that they shou'd not *taste Death*.

As He and *Elisha* were walking and conversing there appear'd a *Chariot of Fire*, and *Horses of Fire*, and parted them asunder; and *Elijah* went up in a *Whirlwind* to Heaven. *Angels* appear'd in Form of a bright Chariot running toward them on the Ground, and separated them, *Elijah* is received into the Chariot, and in a strong Gust of Wind is carried up.

Elisha laments his great Loss, Rents his Clothes in Token of his sorrow, and gathers up the Mantle that fell from his Master, as a Token of his Spirit that *Elijah* had promised shou'd rest upon him, if he saw him after he was seperated. He returns to the Banks of *Jordan*, whose Waters were now gone together again; He takes the Mantle of *Elijah*, with which he had struck and divided the Waters before, and like a Person in an Agony for the Loss of his Master, and under great Sollicitude and Concern of Mind, about that Presence and Favour of God, which his Master had been so much honour'd with, and now going to put the

SERM. the Matter to a Trial, He said (and at the same
 XIV. Time struck the Waters) *Where is the Lord God
 of Elijah?* Let him who was *Elijah's* God vouch-
 safe me his Presence and Favour; and let it
 now appear that his Power doth attend me.

The Words [*Aph-hu*] are left out in our Trans-
 lation which hath puzzled the Criticks: The
 most probable Construction about their Mean-
 ing, seems to be an Emphatical Expression of
 the Perplexity and Care he was then in, about
 the Presence of his Master's God. The Distress
 of his Mind put him in an Agony: And He
 said, *Where is the Lord God of Elijah?* Even *He*,
He who so manifestly appear'd to my Prede-
 cessour; even *He*, that God, *Where is He?*
 That the Waters may divide now for me, as
 they did before.

Others think that by these Words, He an-
 swers his own Question, and so render them;
He is yet in Being; without determining which
 of these is meant. I shall reckon it a Piece of
 good Husbandry (as Bishop *Sanderfon* calls it)
 to glance at both of them.

I shall Endeavour to Improve these Words
 by Considering,

I. Concerning whom this Inquiry is made.

II. The Inquiry it self.

III. Take Notice of the Person making this
 Inquiry.

IV. Inquire whence ariseth all this Concern
 in the Prophet. And then

V. Make some general Application. Let us
 see

I. Con-

I. Concerning whom this Inquiry is made. **SERM.**
The God of Elijah. It will not be amiss to **XIV.**

look a little into the Character of this Eminent Person, whom God honoured with such a Relation; which seems to carry something in it peculiar, and very significant. There is plainly an Emphasis in it: He was a *Man of God*. An Eminent Prophet, to whom the Lord was pleased to Communicate much of his Mind: He was employ'd immediately by God to deliver Messages to the People and Prince. He was a Person of great Integrity, and Steadfastness to God, and for God. His Heart was set, and fix'd for God, warm and zealous for his Honour, and the Revival of Religion: He fear'd the Face of no Man, and encounter'd all Difficulties: He was as active for God as he was bold: He was greatly useful in putting a stop to the Revolt and Apostacy of *Israel* in his Day. God heard his Prayer, wrought many Miracles by him, wonderfully provided for him, appear'd to him in a peculiar Manner; and at last by a sort of *Prerogative* Grace, translated him both Body and Soul to Heaven.

When its said of this Man that God was *His* God. It signifies

1. The God who stood in a special Covenant Relation to *Elijah*. He disdain'd not to be called his Master, and his God; and bound himself to his Servant by solemn and saving *Ties*, that he wou'd thus bless, and do for him; and herein gave him a sort of Claim upon himself.

He

SERM. He had been at Work upon his Heart, and
 XIV. changed, and renewed, it by his Grace, im-
 ~~~~~prest his own Image upon it, and given him  
 his Spirit, as a Principle of Divine Life and  
 Activity, whereby he was sanctified and made  
 a holy Person; put his Name and Fear into his  
 Heart; made him incline to, and choose Obedi-  
 ence to God as his most delightful Employ-  
 ment; enabled him to do him faithful and  
 chearful Service, and then look'd with Favour  
 upon his own Workmanship, and took Pleasure  
 in it: He accepted what he did, heard his  
 Prayers, acted towards him as a Friend and Fa-  
 ther, who had pardoned his Iniquities; kept  
 up a sacred Intercourse with him, keeping  
 down and subduing Temptations for him,  
 weakening the Power of Sin, and giving the  
 holy Principle infused more the ascendant in  
 his Soul: He had a tender Regard to and over  
 him, to guard him from, or in danger, and  
 guide him in the right way: He comforted  
 him by his Spirit, chear'd, supported, and in-  
 spired him with pious Thoughts and good  
 Desires.

2. He was the God who called him to, and  
 furnish'd him for his Work. God called him  
 from other Concerns, seperated him to this  
 holy Employ, and Commanded him to go and  
 act as his Commission'd Servant. He gave  
 him Authority to speak, and enlighten'd his  
 Mind, and put a Message into his Mouth, and  
 bid him deliver it in his Name: He knew  
 what

*what* Errand he went upon, and *who* sent him: SERM.

His God claimed the whole Conduct of him, XIV.  
and directed him *when*, to *whom*, *how*, and *what*  
to speak: He furnished him with Wisdom,  
Courage, and Resolution to speak what was  
right necessary, and proper in such Circum-  
stances. He gave him Zeal and Authority as  
one coming from the most High, about Mat-  
ters of high Importance. God was his *Princi-*  
*pal* from whom he had Instructions, and by  
these he was limited: He gave him the *Tongue*  
*of the Learned*, that he might say all that was  
proper and in the best Manner,

3. He was *Elijah's* God whom he served, and  
honoured, and depended upon. He kept upon  
his Mind a constant *lively* Sense of the Di-  
vine Authority over him, and fixed his Eyes  
steadily upon his Law as the Rule, and his  
Glory as the End, which he proposed to him-  
self: He did this with Purity of intention,  
and this governed all his Designs: His care  
was always to act, as having no Regard to  
himself but under God, and to Approve him-  
self his Servant: The Service and Advance-  
ment of his Interest in the World, was to com-  
mand and direct him in all Cases what to do,  
or not to do. The Lord indeed was *his* God,  
his supreme Ruler, and highest End, and he  
made all other Interests stoop to this: He  
committed himself to his Protection and Care,  
and relied on him for supplies: He resigned  
himself to him as his Proprietor, and Owner;

SERM. as One that had a Right to dispose of, and use  
 XIV. him as he pleased. His Life and all his Powers  
 were made subservient to his Interest in the  
 World: He desired to be employ'd in no  
 other Service but his, nor wou'd have any  
 thing to do with that which interfer'd.

4. He was the God who had graciously own'd  
 and *succeeded* *Elijah*. God had richly endow'd  
 him with the Gifts and Graces of his Spirit:  
 His Faith, Zeal, Steadiness, Magnanimity, and  
 and Mortification to the World, were Un-  
 common and great Proofs of God with him:  
 And His God's Conviction and Terrour went  
 along with the Words of his Mouth; a Proud  
 and wicked Prince sunk down under his Re-  
 bukes. With what sacred Ardour and Assur-  
 ance doth he bespeak the *wandering and Apost-*  
*tate Israelites*? With what holy Confidence  
 doth he bring the Cause of *God* and *Baal* to the  
 Trial? With what Spirit does he face all the  
 Prophets of that *Idol*? But what special To-  
 ken of the Divine Presence had he, when the  
*Fire* came down from Heaven upon the Sacri-  
 fice at his Prayer, and the *Clouds* poured down  
 Rain after a long Draught? both which he  
 had requested. The *Ravens* were directed to  
 feed him; the *Widow's* Cruse of Oil, and *Barrel*  
 of Meal wasted not, and he raised her Son. What  
 shall we say to the glorious and terrible Vi-  
 sion of God at *Horeb*? His Life was a Scene  
 of Wonders; God put the highest Honour up-  
 on him, and many Miracles were wrought by  
 his



his Hand, nor need it be a Question whether **SERM.**  
 he was the Instrument in the Hand of God to **XIV.**  
 recover, and establish many, who were turning  
 from the Worship of the true God.

5. He was the God who by a *Peculiar Indulgence* translated him, that he saw not Death. Having by his Grace, made him ready for Heavenly Glory, and Blessedness, he did by his Angels, send for, and Convey him Soul and Body thither. He called him from the Work in which he had been Zealous and Faithful, to rest in and with his God, whom he had been serving, the God who inclined him to seek a Rest in himself and gave him what he longed for. In favour of *him*, the *Prerogative* was exerted, that the Sentence shou'd not take Place, that *all* Men should Die. A Rare Instance of Divine Favour this! and never shewn before, but Once. He wou'd have his Servant as much distinguished in leaving the World, as He had distinguished himself in it by his Faithfulness. This was such a stroke of Providence, as was apt to awaken a stupid World to consider the State to come, which at that time seem'd much neglected, and forgotten. It was a clear Proof of God's particular Regard to his Servants; and an Assurance that he wou'd not forget their Labour of Love and Suffering.

Thus you see in what Sense He was the God of *Elijah*. Let us stop here a little, and Remark

*from what has been said I shall Remark* 1. The

SERM. I. The wonderful Condescension with which  
 XIV. the great and blessed God treateth his Servants.

~~~~~ If they will be *his* Servants, He will be *their* God: If *they* Honour *him*, *he* will Honour *them*: As fast as *they* engage themselves to *him*, *He* will bind him self to *them*. The more *they* concern themselves for *him*, the more will *He* be concerned for *them*. His Favours increase with their Zeal, and Service. Let the World think and say what it will of them, and their Faithfulness, He owns, and is pleased with it, and will reward it. He becomes obliged to them, by a solemn inviolable League of Friendship. Tho' their best service deserves nothing, and they pretend no Claim; yet shall they not be neglected, and despised, nor disown'd and left at uncertainties. God engages himself to be theirs; His favour and the Light of his Countenance shall be around them; His Perfections are theirs and imploy'd for them; and his veracity is pawn'd for the performance of the grant, that he will *give* and *do* all that is necessary for their safety Support, Comfort and Blessedness. Remark

2. Gods near Relation to and Favour for his Servants shou'd lead us to Enquire after him. What is there more excellent in it self, and necessary to us? To have God so related, and engaged to us, is higher Honour, Surer, Richer, more durable and satisfying Comfort, than the Possession of the whole World. If such Honour and Love of God to his Creatures may
 be

be had who would not put in for a share, and ask how it may be obtain'd and secured? Where is this gracious God who will become ally'd to sinful Creatures? Will be in League with them? And do so much for them? What I have seen and heard of this, makes me willing to know him, and become his, that he also may be mine. Remark

3. God will put special Honour upon Zeal and Faithfulness: Especially when these are pure and unmix'd with Pride, and Worldliness; when Love to God is the reigning governing Passion, and other Principles are strictly guarded against, and carefully suppress'd. There is a beautiful simplicity in Religion unadulterated: It is an Amiable, and Venerable Thing; and hardly ever fails of commanding Respect from Men even of bad Character, especially when the Wisdom of the Serpent, is join'd with the Innocence of the Dove. The Spirit and Conversation of such Men, are strong and convincing Testimonies of Religion: But however this may be traduced by the false, misrepresented by the Artful, and run down by the Violence, and Malignity of the Times; yet Steadiness and Resolution for God, arising from genuine Principles of Love and Zeal for Him, will not fail to strike the Minds of many, and force them to give Religion it's just Praise: However, the upright Man, if he have less Honour from the World, may be Honour'd of God with more Peace in his own

SERM. Breast, may walk in the *Light* of God's Countenance, and have a sweet Calm within: He will

~~~~~ find God near him in his last Moments, and shall triumph in Death as that which carries little or no Terror in it. However, it will all be made to appear in the great Day of Account. Then shall they be distinguish'd as much in the Favour of their Lord, as they were in their Service and Strictness, and they shall then find that none of their *Labour is in vain in the Lord*; while the cold, and fearful who are excusing and shifting off a difficult Service, may find the Frowns and Censures of their Judge.

I shall now proceed to consider.

II. The Enquiry it self. *Where is He?* This supposes

1. The Prophet was not sensible of his Presence. He did not feel that in himself which He thought his Master had felt. That Spirit which was the Principle of all his Eminent, and shining Graces: That Zeal, Confidence, Resolution, and Faith, when He did so much for the Honour of God and the Service of his Cause. He thought it was not with himself, as it had been with his Master; and that this was because He had not that Presence of God with him as He had. The Spirit of God plainly appear'd upon *his* Master; and a noble Spirit it was: Its Excellency and Superiority to any thing Humane, was Conspicuous enough: Now, he reckons himself much a Stranger to these

P423

2. Leaves

these Things, and therefore that He was not animated with the Spirit of the God of Elijah, or in a vastly lower Degree.

SERM.  
XIV.

2. He was under some Apprehensions that He was withdrawn. He was a little Suspicious whether that Eminent Grace, and Virtue of his Master were to continue, that Heavenly Guest which resided with him might be recalled; (for he himself was unworthy of it:) And then what must become of the Messenger and Message of God? How shou'd He support Himself, or hold up Religion in that revolting Age? How shou'd He be resolute enough in Opposition to Wickedness, and *Apostasie*? How shou'd He be exemplary and recommend Religion; How shou'd He stand his ground, and prove Himself sent by *Elijah's* God, if he had not such Vouchers of his Mission, as *Elijah* had?

3. He was very desirous, and had some Hopes that he wou'd return. The Words speak a deep Concern about his Presence: He knew he could never act up to the character of a *Prophet of the Lord*, or support the Reputation of such a one, if God was not with him. They are almost in the nature of a Prayer, and plainly shew what he wished and longed for. *Where is he?* O that He were with me! Its what I rejoice in extreamly: *Though* I have no Claim to the Favour my Master enjoy'd; yet won't it be for *his Honour*? Don't his Cause as much want it? My desires almost carry me in-

SERM. to Hopes that it will be so. I can't forbear  
XIV. Expecting great things from God in this Case.

~ The large Experience *Elijab* had of the Indulgence of his God, *was great* Encouragements to him: He who had seen the Elevation of his Masters Spirit, under Divine Influence, and the great Honour God did him, (for he had received the Mantle that Dropt from his Master, and was anointed to be a Prophet in the Room of *Elijab*) and knew so much of God's Goodness to them who were his devoted Servants, had from thence felt some Encouragement to himself that God wou'd be with him. But

2. The Words imply some things. *Where is He?*

1. Where is that Spirit and Energy which appear'd so wonderfully in the Purity and Zeal of my Master? That which refined, raised, and exalted the Spirit of that good Man to so near a Resemblance of the blessed God? That made him so intirely and absolutely the Lords? That warmed him with such Love, and made him so Busy, Active, Zealous, and Faithful; that made him so chearful and unwearied in his Work, that he seem'd all Life, Strength, and Vigour for God: This made him act as though he had nothing else to do, but to serve and honour Him. O! where is that God? that so formed, spirited, and enlighten'd him? His Heart and Soul seem'd knit to the Lord: He stuck fast as one not to be moved away: No Cold,



Coldness, *no* Indifference: He lived at a Rate SERM.  
 vastly superiour to others: He seem'd like an XIV.  
 Angel among Men: He was a Man so much  
 Divine that one might plainly see by all he  
 did, that God was with him, and that he was  
 animated by his Spirit.

2. *Where is the Lord God of Elijah?* Where  
 is that Glorious Evidence of the Divine Pre-  
 sence in his Word? What is become of that?  
 Will it be yet continued? He had manifest-  
 ly own'd and patronized Him; enabled him  
 to speak, and act at a high rate for God; He  
 was *mighty in Word and Deed* before all the  
 People; they saw plainly the Hand of the Lord  
 was with Him: He prayed before all the Peo-  
 ple that God wou'd appear and make it known  
 that he was his Servant; and he did so, to their  
 Conviction and Astonishment, that they fell  
 upon their Faces, and cry'd out; *The Lord be  
 is God: The Lord be is God.* He had such Gifts  
 and Power, as proved beyond all Doubt, that  
 God was with him: O let not that Power,  
 that Grace be with-held from me; make the  
 Evidence of it bright and strong; let it be  
 manifest in the Consciences of them, to whom  
 I am sent that I speak by Commission from  
 Heaven. Let the Seal of the most high be set  
 to my Ministry, that none may be able to de-  
 ny that it is thine. At my Word let the same  
 great Things be done, may I go *forth in the  
 Spirit and Power of Elias, to turn the Hearts  
 of the Fathers to the Children,* Mal. iv. 6. Luke

SERM. i. 17. to convince to reclaim the wicked; and  
 XIV. to support the Cause of Religion in the World.



3. Where is the Honour done to Religion and the Benefit accruing to the Souls of Men? Let it be seen that this is indeed the true Religion; the way in which God wou'd be known, and served; that this is thine own Appointment, and which thou wilt support against all the Attempts of the *Many*, and the *Great*. Let God yet interpose, with the Miraculous Tokens of his Presence, and Favour, to confound and shame them out of their Idolatry; and make them own, that the *Lord Jehovabh reigneth*; that he hath special Respect to them, who Fear and Worship him: *Let the true Religion be recommended and established*; and make it appear that I am God's Prophet to whom he reveals his Will; that we have that among us which others have not; this will make thy Worship appear great and venerable. Let this People be reformed and sanctified by thy Grace, be a more holy, wise and righteous People than others. Let the *Arm of the Lord be revealed* to them, that they may Fear, and Love, and Worship thee alone. Let their corrupt Manners be reform'd, let them be brought to think and act, like reasonable Creatures; not worship Stocks and Stones, but look to him who made the Heavens, and Earth, and all Things therein; yeild themselves to obey him; put themselves under the Shadow of his Wings; expect *Supplies* of Good from his Hand; seek after

after the Purification of their Natures in the SERM.  
Image of God; and their Blessedness in enjoy- XIV.  
ing him. Here let us Remark

I. Good Ministers are deeply concern'd, that the Presence of God may be seen, and felt with themselves, and their People. If they are affected as they shou'd be, they can't be indifferent in the Case. They know that the very Life, and Being of all that is good dependeth upon it; much more the Prosperity of it. When this is with-held Corruption will not Die: Faith and Love, Peace and Holiness, have their Spring and Support from hence: And their Condition will be good, or bad, just as this is vouchsafed, or refused. The Zeal of Ministers will cool, their Resolutions slack; all their Powers be enervated, and become faint, where this is not; the Divine Life will not spread (and seize upon others to quicken them.) No, nor will it subsist where it is, unless maintained and supported thus. God must give us Life, and enliven all we do with his Concourse, or else it will come to Nothing. It's he that must make Souls feel what we speak, and give a Force and Energy to his Word, and Ordinances administer'd by us, or it will be but a dead letter. It can only convey Light and Life, Strength and Joy into Souls, so impregnated with his Power: Hence it is Efficacious, to rouze, to quicken, to chear and purify, and lead them on, both to Work and Conflict, to Victory and Triumph. How

again  
good men  
will be  
deeply

0

0

spread

0



SERM. is it possible, that a Spirit duly concern'd for  
 XIV. the Honour of God, Credit of Ordinances, Sal-  
 vation of Souls, shou'd be without Care for  
 God's Presence. This is the main thing in our  
 Work and Success. The more we have it at  
 Heart to acquit our selves well, and do good,  
 the more we shall be concerned for it. And  
 therefore,

2. The very suspicion of Divine Presence  
 withdrawn must be very distressing to a serious  
 Mind. As he expects all good to himself, and  
 others in the Enjoyment of it, so there is no-  
 thing terrible, but he apprehends it from the  
 Loss thereof. When this is withdrawn, good  
 Motions in his own Soul are less frequent and  
 powerful; all his Sinews become enfeebled.  
 He is like *Sampson* without his Locks. Vital  
 Godliness must decline in himself, and others;  
 Ordinances will soon loose their efficacy, of-  
 fence and scandal will abound in the Church;  
 Christians will be weak and sickly, peevish  
 and quarrelsome; some will turn their Backs  
 upon Religion, and go down the Stream of  
 worldly Pleasure, or be smother'd and lost in  
 its Cares. Irregular and Uneven walking will  
 be visible to the discredit of Religion, Lean-  
 ness and Barrenness will be found in Conver-  
 sation; Envy, Hatred, Emulation, Discord,  
 Strife Reviling and devouring each other;  
 whole Families famous for Religion will soon  
 degenerate, Towns and Neighbourhoods be over-  
 spread with Sin, Iniquity will abound, the  
 wicked

wicked will grow bold, and the Church be- SERM.  
come a Wilderness; and the very Face of all XIV.  
that is good covered with shame and contempt. ~~~~~

To this pass the want of God's Presence, will soon reduce a People: And what can give more Uneasiness to a serious Mind? It will pierce him deep, it is to him the dearest of all Interests; and the Thoughts of it's Decay, much more of its Ruin, go very near him.

I wou'd take Notice

III. Of the Person making this Enquiry, and the Time when it was made. It was *Elisha*, a Prophet, a young Prophet, who had just now lost his Master, a Wise, and Holy, and very excellent Man. He was deeply affected with the Church's loss: He was going to succeed him in his Work and Office; great Service and great Difficulty, were now devolved upon him. He had formidable Oppositions to expect. He saw his Work no less than his Master's, and his own personal Gifts and Abilities much inferior. It's this Person so circumstanc'd who makes this Enquiry: *Where is the Lord God of Elijah.* *Let us all*

*Remark.* 1. Prophets shou'd be Enquiring after God, and his Presence. There is nothing so nearly concerns them as this: Whence must they have Qualifications, Faithfulness, Comfort, Assistance, Support, and spiritual Success? They shou'd be ever Sollicitous about future Knowledge, Wisdom, Diligence, Resolution, Patience, Meekness, Fortitude; and about all the Grace

*To conclude use the words us*

SERM.

XIV.

*off Religion*  
*our*  
  
 Grace of God within <sup>us</sup> them; that <sup>we</sup> they may at all times be under Divine Guidance; and the power of the Lord be present with them in the Exercise of their Office; that the Authority of Godliness, may be felt and submitted to, the Grace of God be Observed adored and thankfully received. Its a great Part of <sup>our</sup> their Business to be securing the special aid of Heaven, to attend <sup>us</sup> them, that <sup>our</sup> their Labour may not be in vain.

*Remark. 2.* A young Prophet's concern shou'd begin here. It shou'd be his leading and principal Care; here the work must begin: If he lay not this as the Foundation he will go all wrong. This once secured, he hath a firm and broad Bottom, upon which to build both his Labour and Hope: This will improve and brighten his Parts, enlarge his Capacity, sanctify and make Him useful; it will put a Glory upon his Ministrations, secure the Honour and Reputation of Ordinances, and Ministers, and make them answer the End, for which they were appointed. He will then appear to be a Minister of God, a commission'd Servant of the Lord; this will be of more Consequence to his Comfort and usefulness; the Salvation of himself, and those that hear him, than all the assistance of Art, or Nature: Without this, the finest Parts, and biggest stock of Learning will be dry and useless; I may add that those who are not *mainly* careful in this Point, are in Danger of wanting this Favour.

*Remark.*



Remark. 3. Sollicitous Enquiries after the Divine Presence are then peculiarly Seasonable, when our Work and Difficulties are very

SERM.  
XIV.

great. That's always wanting, but at some times more than others; when there is more than ordinary Care to be taken, Work to be done, and *Prudence* required: When uncommon Opposition will be made, either through Ignorance, or Perverseness and Pride of Men; when Sin is more rife, People more infatuate and Mad, and Stubborn in it; when it's supported with Power; when the Inclinations of corrupt Nature are more threatened and opposed by the Message which Ministers are to carry; then it will be harder for them to do what is their Duty, and *they'll* want more Faith, Patience, Boldness and Wisdom. It will then be more difficult to engage Attention, or prevail with those we are sent to. Then more Grace from Heaven is necessary to open their Eyes, to convince their Judgments to remove their Prejudices, to subdue their Lusts, to reclaim them from Sin, and to get them heartily to comply with the Demands made upon them. Things are not so easily fastened upon the Conscience, when Lust and Passion have so much room to speak; and Ministers have more than ordinary Want of Assistance to accomplish the Business they are sent upon.

Remark. 4. When the good Helps fail that we used to have, we have special Reason to desire, that the Spirits of them who are gone  
may

SERM. may rest upon us *who survive*. When *Elijah* XIV. is taken away, then his Successor asketh, where  is God? The Church is then become so much the poorer in Learning, Gifts, and Grace; there are so many fewer Helps, as there are faithful and able Ministers gone; these are less diffused, less frequent, and extensive in their Use and Exercise: They can't be so often engaged, or in so many Places as greater Numbers could; yet there is the same number to save (perhaps *more*,) to be instructed, warned, and called; as well as Saints to be encouraged, cheered, and quickened. When *Elijah* was removed, there was but one of the two left, and this one become weaker then he was; if he had not the God of *Elijah* with him he was an undone Man, and his Case desperate; He wanted the Advice, Direction, Rebuke, Encouragement, of his Wife, and Holy, resolute and experienced Master: Great advantage doubtless he reaped, by the Presence, and Conversation, of so great and good a Man, who had so long been acquainted with Men of all sorts, and knew how to bespeak them. It was Time when he saw so much Wickedness, and less Help, that he shou'd pray that his Masters Spirit might rest upon him, and his Masters God be with him.

I shall now Enquire

IV. Whence ariseth all this Concern in the Prophet? For the Question Implies a Mind strongly

ELISHA'S Cry after ELIJAH'S God. 429  
strongly affected in the Case. *Where is the Lord God of Elijah? Why* SERM.  
XIV.

I, *Elijah* was taken away from his Head, and so he must be no more strengthen'd and quickened by his Example. No more shamed out of Sloth, and Cowardice, by the Sight of his Masters Application to Business, and Resolution in it. He must have no more recourse to him for Advice and Direction: He shou'd have him no more to watch over him and pray for him; no more to take Part of the Work with him, or assist him in bearing Burdens, and Oppositions: He must now stand single against the stream of wickedness which run with so much violence. He had used to resort to him, and say to himself. *Days shall speak and Multitude of Tears shall teach Wisdom.* He knew there was a vast stock of Grace there, that God was with him, honour'd and favour'd him, and that was worth all the rest; this made him think his loss was exceeding great; and when he cou'd no longer have *Elijah*, He wou'd fain have *Elijah's God*; *That wou'd*, though (he had so great an opinion of his Master, that he thought) *nothing else cou'd answer his loss, but Elijah's God.*

II. A Sense of his own Weakness and Inequality to the Work and Difficulty he had in View. He knew himself much inferior to his Master, whose Wisdom, Courage, Grace,  
and



SERM. and Interest in Heaven were so great. He  
 XIV. was *such a Man*, whom God loved and hon-  
 oured so much, as to send a special Message a  
 charge of Angels to carry him up to Heaven  
 without tasting Death. Such a one must be a  
 special Favourite, and able to do more than ano-  
 ther could, and while they were both engaged in  
 the Service, there verily was but little done, to  
 stem the Torrent of Wickedness: The Prince  
 and People remain'd wicked still: But few  
 were brought over from Sin to God; all the  
 great Works, his Master had done, were not  
 enough to Work a Reformation: But after all  
 his Master's Excellency and the Loss of him,  
 yet cou'd he but have the Presence of his God;  
 he should be qualified for any thing he was cal-  
 led to do, or bear: No difficulty then but he  
 cou'd surmount it; no Trouble but he durst  
 grapple with it: He cou'd do all things, if the  
 God Elijah helped him; however terrible the  
 aspect of things might be, yet none of all these  
 cou'd move Him.

III. He was very Sollicitous to quit himself  
 honourably in his Post. He received his Mi-  
 nistry from the Lord, and he had it much at  
 Heart to approve himself faithful to Him.  
 Therefore he asketh. *Where is the Lord God  
 of Elijah?* " If he will be near at Hand, and  
 " present, I shall refuse no Service, bogle at  
 " no suffering. I shall then deliver all my  
 " Message, the whole Counsel of God and keep  
 " back

" *back nothing profitable to their Souls to whom* SERM.  
 " I am sent: O, for *his* Presence with me! XIV.  
 " that so I may speak (as may be most for their  
 " Conversation;) that not Pride and Passion;  
 " neither Love to self, nor Fear of Men may  
 " byass; that I may not be too Sollicitous to  
 " please Men, and so *Prophecy smooth Things* to  
 " them, (who ought to be treated in another  
 " Manner) only to avoid Restraint, and live  
 " at Ease, and Peace. That I may not be a-  
 " fraid of Censure, and reproach of Men, but  
 " value Peace and Purity in my own Consci-  
 " ence, the Honour of God and safety of Souls,  
 " more than all Worldly Considerations what-  
 " soever." He was concern'd that he might  
 have Faith, to bear him up in Tempests, that  
 might arise; that he might *not* be afraid, or  
 ashamed, to bear his Testimony for God, a-  
 gainst Sin in all Cases; that he might never  
 swerve from the Way of Duty; That as a  
 Rock, he might stand fast against all Oppositi-  
 ons; that through his whole Course he might  
 support with Decency, the Honour of his Pro-  
 phetick Character; and that he might *finish his*  
*Course with Joy*, and Dye as a Servant of God,  
 and receive a Reward among his own on the  
 other Side of the Grave; and this was never  
 to be done without the special Presence of God.  
 Through him Elijah did all this; without him  
 he wou'd have been no better qualified than  
 others. *Elijah's God can be the God of*  
 others,

SERM. others, and enable them to do what he did,  
 XIV. Therefore, Where is this God?



IV. Another ground of this Concern was, The Languishing State of Religion, which none cou'd revive but Elijah's God. The Revolt of those Days was general; had spread it self through all the Country. The *Calves of Dan*, and *Bethel*, were National Sins: Besides the other Idols, which were equally dishonourable to the true God. Prince and People were all corrupt; nor was the Priesthood unpolluted. There seem'd to be a general Conspiracy against the true Religion, the People bent to Blacksliding, Universal Dissoluteness of Manners, and depraved Minds. Now, though Elijah had bravely made Head against them, yet few comparatively were brought back; the Work of recovering the Honour and Interest of Religion yet remaining, and Elijah himself was gone, and their Work as great as it was, and the Strength to do it less: If the God of Elijah wou'd be with him, he shou'd go about the Work with Courage, and Hope; otherwise, he shou'd be terrify'd and disheartened, and the Church and Nation wou'd sink into a worse Condition; Sinners wou'd grow in Number, and Wickedness; and they wou'd triumph upon the Ruin of all Religion: Not a Soul can be perswaded, convinced or gain'd, if God be not with him; Their strong and beloved



beloved Lusts, will not be let go, without a SERM.  
Divine Energy. What can *he* do of himself? XIV.

V. The great Credit it wou'd be to Religion, and the Service it wou'd do to his Cause, if he did appear, was another reason why he asked this Question. The Presence of God with his Ministers wou'd do that, which the World and Church were in great want of. It would awake drowsy sleepy Mortals, who were sunk into Sin, and become quite regardless, of a State and World to come. It's true indeed, that the ordinary Course of Nature is a glorious Proof of the Divine Being, and Providence; but this stately, magnificent Structure, is seen every Day, a common ordinary Thing, which makes no unusual Noise, and waketh not the Thoughts of a careless World, so much as things vastly less, which are out of the common Track; the raising a Sick, or dying Person; procuring Rain from Heaven, or Fire; this startles sleepy Souls, leads them to think of the invisible God, whom they did not consider and regard before; it begets a Reverence, and *Dread* of him; they are brought then, to think, and enquire after him; this awes them, to adore and worship him; it settles the wavering, encourageth and strengtheneth the Hands of the Weak; gives a Reputation to the Worshipers of the true God; is a Means of restraining the Rage and Violence of wicked Hands, and Tongues against them: It adds to the Number, Strength, and Chearfulness of

SERM. Gods Servants; and makes them more Strenuous

XIV. and warm in the Cause of Piety: They are  
 not so much ashamed then to go against the  
 Rage of the World: It enables them to de-  
 spise the Multitude of Contemners, Opposers,  
 and Scorners.——I add, He had a great Dread  
 of the Consequence of God's Absence, both  
 with Respect to himself, and others; He wou'd  
 then have the reverse to all, I have mention'd,  
 to apprehend, namely, that He shou'd then be  
 quite disabled for, and dishearten'd in his  
 Work; His gifts wou'd die away, and his  
 Grace lie dormant and unactive, as if they  
 were not; shame, and Fear, and Sloth, wou'd  
 prevail in him against the Call of God, and  
 Convictions of his own Conscience, and the  
 Necessities both of Saints and Sinners. He shou'd  
 then neither be ready for Duty, nor Vigorous  
 and Skilful in it; He shou'd be in Danger of  
 falling by every Temptation that assaulted  
 him; he shou'd want Light and Heat, Strength  
 and Vigour; the Word of the Lord wou'd dye  
 on his Lips; others wou'd not hear and be-  
 lieve, nor obey the Message; he cou'd per-  
 swade and prevail with no Body; Religion  
 wou'd perish; Impiety prevail: And indeed,  
 what might he not fear wou'd be the Conse-  
 quence of a departed God?

I come now to make some General Applica-  
 tion. And was the Good Man so much con-  
 cern'd about the Presence of God for Fear of  
 losing it? Then

*Use. I.*

Use. I. How sad is it, that there are no more SERM.  
 such Enquiries in our Days? That there shou'd XIV.  
 be so much Reason to suspect, that God hath  
 withdrawn his Spirit, and it's Influence from  
 us; and there is so little concern about it? Can  
 a People lie under stronger, plainer suspicions  
 than we do, that God is departed? And one of  
 our worst and most threatening Symptoms is,  
 that we are not afraid of such a Case being ours:  
 We are not affected with it as a sad or dan-  
 gerous Case. How few Tokens of the Divine  
 Presence have we? Alas! that we can reckon  
 up no more; and that we shou'd not be alarm'd,  
 with such a State of Things! One wou'd think  
 that the least ground of Suspicion shou'd give  
 us great uneasiness, and lead us to Enquire,  
 whether it was so or no. What shall the great  
 God, the God of Grace and Peace, the Prop  
 of the Creation, the Blessedness of Souls, with-  
 draw, and we make no Inquiry how he was  
 provoked to it? And how He may be pre-  
 vailed upon to return? *Are* we not concern'd  
 in such a loss? And *shou'd* not we be concern'd  
 about it? He is more to his Church, than the  
 Sun to the World, than Food in our Houses,  
 or Breath in our Nostrils; it *may* be well  
 with us when these shall Cease; but *woe* be to  
 us if God depart from us: And this is our Case.  
 God is leaving us, and but few are sensible  
 that he is so; or seem not to Care, whether  
 they have him present or not; piteous Case!  
 Because it's only a *Concern* for his Presence that



SERM. must secure it. (Look round you Christians,  
XIV. can't you see a plain withdrawing of the Pre-  
sence of God.)

Allow me to lay before you, *My Fathers, and Brethren*, the Sense of one of the Greatest and Best of Men in the last Age, when things were at a much better pass than now they are.

It's set in strong and moving Language \*.  
" Its plain, (says he) too sadly plain, that there  
" is a great retraction of the Spirit of God  
" even from us: We know not how to speak  
" living Sense to Souls, how to get within you:  
" our words die in our Mouths, or drop and die,  
" between us and you. We even faint, when  
" we speak; long experienced, unsuccessful-  
" ness makes us despond: We speak not as Per-  
" sons that hope to prevail, that expect to make  
" you serious, heavenly, mindful of God, and  
" to walk more like Christians. The Methods  
" of alluring and convincing Souls, even that  
" some of us have known, are lost from among  
" us, in a great part. There hath been other ways  
" taken, then we can tell how now to fall up-  
" on, for the mollifying of the obdurate, and  
" and the awakening of the secure, and the con-  
" vincing, and the perswading of the obstinate,  
" and the winning of the disaffected. Surely  
" when the Effusion of the Spirit shall be, Mini-  
" sters shall know how to speak to better pur-  
" pose, with more compassion and Sense, with  
" more Seriousness, with more Authority and

\* *Mr. How's Prosp. State, &c.* p. 80.

Allure-

"Allurement, than we now find we can." SERM.

While *we* adapt these things to our selves, XIV.  
 may you not look round you *Christians*, and see terrible Proofs of it *among you*? How doth Infidelity and *Profaneness* triumph? Is there not a General Declension of the Power, and Life of strict Godliness? Is not Family Religion sadly neglected? Pride, Sensuality, and Worldliness, have eaten Religion out of the Heart; and driven it from the Closet and House. How negligently are Lord's-Days observed? How many satisfy themselves with now and then a Sermon? Once a Week, or once a Month it may be. How slightly are Week Day's Opportunities accounted of? How little Guard is set against Intemperance and Excess? How many Evenings are wasted in Taverns and Ale-houses? Which wou'd be much better spent in the Closet, conversing with your Bibles, good Books, or your own Hearts. We can remember the Time, when there were many Persons, and Families that acted so, as few do now. Are not these sad Tokens? But where is the Man, almost that feeleth himself affected with this? That is making serious Inquiries; *Where is the Lord God of Elijah?*

Use. II. Let us all begin to ask, with the Good Man, in the Text? *Where is he?* And do it upon the same Principles too: It's high time we were inquisitive. Let *Us, my Fathers, and Brethren*, begin; We, who are to be *Ensamples to the Flock*, and Patterns of good Works; let

SERM. us ask, where is the Lord God of our Fathers?

XIV. That Spirit whereby they acted, so excellently, and honourably, for the Cause of God among us; whereby they spake, and lived, so far above the common Rate: Were not they, the Credit, and Ornament, as well as the Support of Religion in their Day, burning and shining Lights? Were they not *Ministers*? Was it not Easily perceived, that Heart spake to Heart, and Soul to Soul: Oh! the Depth, the Strength, the Pungency, the Warm Life, and Zeal of their Sermons; the feeling savoury Experimental Discourses with which they entertain'd their Hearers! Where is that Love to the Redeemer and the Souls that he hath bought?

And do you my *Christian Friends* make the same Enquiry: Where is that Power from Heaven, that used to reach our Hearts, awaken, humble and melt us? Where is that Glory, that the Saints *have* seen? *Which way went the Spirit* of the Lord *from us*? O! when will he come, and be again, like the *Refiners Fire*, and *Fullers Sope*: Where is he, who hath been seen in his Church as a Spirit of Illumination, and Conviction, as a renewing, sanctifying, confirming, comforting, purifying Spirit? And let all do this, from the same Principle as the Prophet here; from the Consideration of the Losses we have sustained; the Weakness of our Hands; the great Weight and Difficulty of our Work; how much we are concern'd to do our Duty in the Case; and how much it will  
be



be for the Advantage of Religions Cause, that SERM.  
we have this Presence. XIV.

*Use.* III. Add the fervent Prayer of Faith to your Enquiries. O! that he wou'd manifest himself with Us, that we may have the Tokens of his Presence and Favour, Assistance and Acceptance: This is what we want; and beg nothing less. Nothing less, will answer the high and sacred Purposes we are aiming at. The Cause and Interest of God must languish, and dye among us without it. It's not enough to Enquire, but Means must be used to preserve what we have, or recover what we have lost; when God hath *poured out a Spirit of Supplication upon us*; there will be Hopes that he is among us.

Let us my Brethren lift up a Cry, that the God, whose Presence we are concern'd about, wou'd not withdraw, but return to us; that we may feel our selves *Divinitus tacti*, moved by the Spirit of God to, and in our Work. That the sacred Light of Divine Truth may shine in our Minds, that a purer Flame of sacred Love may glow in our Hearts, for the Honour of God, the Purity of the Church, and tender melting Compassions for the Souls of Men; that we may know how to perswade, as the *Ambassadors* of God; and *in Christ's stead*, to plead his Cause against Sin and Sinners with greater Force and Authority; that we may be able to awaken, allure, afright Sinners, and *build up Saints in their most holy Faith*; that we may

SERM. know how to speak, as we ought to speak, to  
XIV. rebuke, reprove, exhort, and by our own Con-

~ conversation, recommend the pure and holy precepts, of the Religion of Jesus to the Esteem and Choice of others; being *Ensamples to the Flock*; that he wou'd make his Word in our Mouths powerful to the *pulling down strong Holds*; that Multitudes may *believe and turn unto the Lord*; that there may be *great Grace upon all the Churches*; that there may be no more Deaths, and Barrenness upon the Word; that we may have *fresh anointing from on high*; the Grace of God in us; and the Presence of God with us, to animate us in our Ministry, and guide us in Life, That *we may go in and out before the Flock of God, and find Pasture.*

Let People pray that God wou'd be with and bless his Word to every good Purpose, for which it comes; that he wou'd make it *profitable for Doctrine, Reproof, Correction, Instruction in Righteousness*; that the Force of Divine Truths may be great, and be felt by you; that their sweetness may be tasted; that we may come to you in *the Fulness of the Blessing of the Spirit*; that our Preaching may be *a savour of life, unto life to many, Not of Death unto Death*; that you may not come to the *wells of Salvation*, and find no Water there. How often doth the Apostle say, *Brethren pray for us?* The more of Gods Gracious Presence we have, the better it will be for you, as well as for

for us. The better Services we shall be able to do the Church of Christ. Ministers are like to have more or less of the Divine Presence, as you are more or less concern'd about it. If it is with-held from us, it is in Judgement to you; as ever you hope, or wish our success with you the Credit and Preservation of Religion, Address the great God for his Presence: Without something of this, the Ministry will be a *Burden* to us, and you too, both now and at the great Day. Consider

I. There never was more Need of the Divine Presence than now. Never was a Spirit of Infidelity so rise among us; never had it the Vogue and Countenance as now; and this not only among Persons, who have given up themselves to brutal Apostacy, or the ignorant and unthinking; but among Persons who pretend to a refined Taste, strict and close Reasoning, to great Regard to the principles of Liberty, and natural Religion. The dissoluteness of our Manners is notorious and dreadful; the Spirits of Men appear to be profligate and abandon'd, lost to all shame or sense of Dishonesty. Uncleaness, Swearing, Drunkenness, Prophaneation of the Ordinances, and Day of God, Injustice, Pride, Sensuality, a loose and formal Profession of Religion, that is estranged from the Power and Life of strict Godliness are the Diseases of which we are Sick. Look around you; are not things in general going to Rack and Ruin; going apace; we seem to stand upon



SERM. on the *very Brink*, a few more Steps will carry

XIV. us off the Precipice, and whither we shall fall the Enemies of Christ see with Pleasure; but we, alas! with little Concern: What can prevent this, but the Presence and Power, and Grace of the God of *Elijah*? Our Wants are great at this Day, in the Church of God, in the Families, and in the Hearts of Professors: Have we not a Call to Prayer, when so many good People are removed by Death, in a Year or two, and so many *useful Ministers*? Our Hands are weak because of them, and all our Wounds are not closed to this Day. You know your Loss: Do I need to say, that you want the *deep Learning, the fine Towering Thoughts, the Pathetick Speaking Talents of a RETNOLDS.*

*The Prudence. The unwearied Industry, the chearful Seriousness, and extensive Benevolence of a SPILSBURT.*

Don't we justly Lament our Want of the *solid Judgment, the calm and meek Spirit, the unaffected Piety, and Gravity of a GODLET.*

*That Holy Zeal, Vivacity, and Eagerness, for the Service of God and Souls which was visible in a THOMPSON.*

I might carry your thoughts to other Places, and open a wider Scene of Affliction; but I stop here, and may the Hand of God stop that is gone out among us, and no more Breaches be made upon us, if it be his Will. I might tell you, how many pious Families have lost their Heads, how many holy Youths, who promised

mis'd great and good things, have been snatch'd away; but I forbear, you see there is need enough to pray that Gods Presence may be vouchsafed us. And

SERM.

XIV.

II. Who knows but you may succeed. The God we pray to is a God that hears Prayers; our Recovery is not Impossible to him, though it is to any Power less than his: A few have sometimes been heard; nay one for a great Number. *Moses* obtain'd that the Plague shou'd be stay'd, after it had been in the Camp of Israel: What if God shou'd so far honour you, as to make you the Instruments of his Return to us? *Prayer and Intercession for all Men, are good and Acceptable in the sight of God.* Never let it be said, that God was going from us, and there was none to beg his Stay; none that valued it, and *lamented after the Lord*; none that wou'd lay so sad a Case to Heart; none that thought his Presence of so much Importance, as to desire him not to go away.

You have yet Encouragement: For,

I. Is not Elijah's God yet in Being? Did not the young Prophet encourage himself with this, when under so great a Concern in the very same Case?

If we take the Words, as an answer to his own Question; this is their Sense. Though *Elijah* is ceased to be Gods Prophet; God is not ceased. He both is, and is the God of them,

SERM. them, who Love, and Trust, and Serve him;

XIV. he hath the same Power, and Grace to bestow  
 ~~~~~ on me, and others, as on *Elijah*. The Case  
 therefore is not desperate and helpless: He
 is yet all he was, when *Elijah* lived: If
 he had ceased to be, there cou'd be no Hopes;
 but since he *is*, what have we to do, but to
 look up towards him, and cry after him?

II. Is not the Residue of the Spirit with him;
 He hath the Spirit to dispense, with his Gifts
 and Graces, in all fulness yet: his Hand is not
 shortened, or the Treasure of his Grace ex-
 hausted: He can dispense as large Measures of
 the Spirit now, to his Ministers and People,
 as ever he did, and with as much Ease; nor is
 their Efficacy at all abated: He can make the
 Power, Wisdom, Goodness, and Justice of his
 Name known; He can spread the Glory and
 Terrour of it; He can do as great Things by
 his Word; Recover the Dying Cause of God-
 linefs, and bring it into Reputation; and stem
 the tide of Wickedness by others as well as by
Elijah. He is not tied to any one Instrument
 whatsoever. When his Ministers die, the Word
 of the Lord liveth, and shall live for ever; He
 can do *what* he will; by *whom* he will; can
 make his Servants, fit for his Work, raise up
 Children to *Abraham* out of the Stones; and
 make a Prophet Zealous, Faithful, and Success-
 ful to whom he will.

III. Cou'd

III. Cou'd Elijah do any more without his God than others, till God thus distinguish'd Him by his Grace and Spirit? He don't appear to have been any other way superiour to the Rest. This made him Excell and Shine, in Doctrine, and Conversation, and mighty Works, that he wrought, as a Preacher of the Lord; a Reformer of the Corruptions of the Church. And will not the same Grace, bestow'd by the same Hand, do the same for us? What may not we expect, for our selves and others; if the Spirit of the Lord come upon us? Shall not we become other Men? Preach in a more effectual Manner than now we do? Be *burning and shining Lights*. People will hear other kind of Sermons, and be dealt with at another Rate. This will elevate and raise the Spirit, enlarge and open the Mind, purify the Heart, inspirit with Wisdom, Courage, Zeal, Resolution; it will purify and cleanse them and make them fit means of reforming and building up others.

IV. Have we not all the same Need of this that Elijah had? Don't our Work and Difficulties make his *Presence* necessary? *What*: Have we less to do than he had? Are the Lusts of them we have to do with, less dear to them than *Israels Idols*? Can we be furnished for our Work, and act our Part as Ministers with Honour and Success, with less Assistance than he had? At least, a suitable Proportion of this Spirit

SERM. Spirit is no less necessary for the Glory of

XIV. God, and Salvation of Souls; than what he had, was necessary for him: Will our Heads be clear, our Hearts Warm, our Lives Exemplary? Shall we be Bold, Wise, Resolute, Vigilant, Conscientious, and live above the Fear of Men without it? Shall we speak with Power, and Authority, as Ministers of the God of Heaven? Shall we perswade, and draw Souls? by *no* means. We do *as verily* want the Presence of Elijah's God, and I believe *as much*, though not exactly in the same Way, and to the same Purpose.

V. Will not the Presence of Elijah's God do all for us that we want? Furnish us for our Work? Adorn our Souls with all Gifts and Grace? As Men who must our selves be holy, the Servants of God, conform'd to his Will, and fit to bear the Vessels of the Sanctuary. This will fit us to speak to others in his Name, and lead us to say things that are fitting, in a proper Manner. This will give us skill, to speak proper Things, and to treat of them so as shall be for Edification, giving to every Soul its Portion; Instruction to the Ignorant, Encouragement to the Weak, Comfort to them who Mourn; Close and Serious, Plain and Rational Reproof to the Wicked and Disorderly. This will support us under difficulty, guide in Perplext and intricate Cases, what we ought to do: Inspirit us with Resolution, against the Reproach

Reproach and Censure of Malignant Minds **SERM.**
 and Tongues: Bear up the Mind under suffer- **XIV.**
 ing, abuse, and injury, when all Manner of

Evil, is said of us falsely for God's Sake. This will make us steady in shaking Times, render every one *Justum & tenacem propositi virum*, That *si fractus Illabatur orbis impavidum ferient ruina*. This will give us Success, it will make the Word powerful, to awaken Consciences, and change Hearts, convince of Sin and Misery, lead to Christ, put us upon serious Enquiries, Comfort the returning Sinner with Hopes of Pardon and Reconciliation, make us habitually serious, holy, watchful, diligent, industrious, mortify'd Christians, loving, peaceable Heavenly-minded; Zealous for the Power and Purity of Religion; fruitful in every good Word, and Work; personally and relatively good, to our selves and all about us; live on Earth usefully, die and go to Heaven safely, and comfortably when called away. It will credit Religion; then it will appear that Religion hath a great, and glorious Author; that the Design, and nature of Religion is divinely Excellent; that the Ministers of it run not of their own Heads uncommission'd: That Religion is the Support, and Comfort, the Beauty and Order of the moral World. Thus we shall live and die Well, we shall act up to our Character, bring Honour to our Lord's Name, make him more known, loved, feared, and trusted in by Mankind: We shall contribute
 in

SERM. in the best Manner, to the Happiness of the
XIV. World, and be most deserving of their Respect,

whether we have it or not. God will be pleased with us; we may go on with Pleasure, and at last die with Peace and Comfort, as having apply'd our selves in Earnest, to the great and valuable ends of Life; and may chearfully resign our Souls into his Hands, to rest with him, and receive the Reward his Grace hath promised.

VI. Did not *Elisha* soon find his Masters God, when he had made this Enquiry after him? As soon as he spoke the Words, he smote the Waters with the Mantle; and they parted hither and thither, and he went over: The difficulty before him vanished, when God appear'd. He soon had a Token, of the Favour of *Elijah's* God. What greater Encouragement do we want than this, to continue in Prayer; namely, that this is the Way, wherein God hath been found; and there are the same Reasons, now in Being, the same Need of it, and Advantage by it as before. God is the same God, and hath the same Power and Grace; therefore may his Presence be expected by them that seek Him.

F I N I S.

